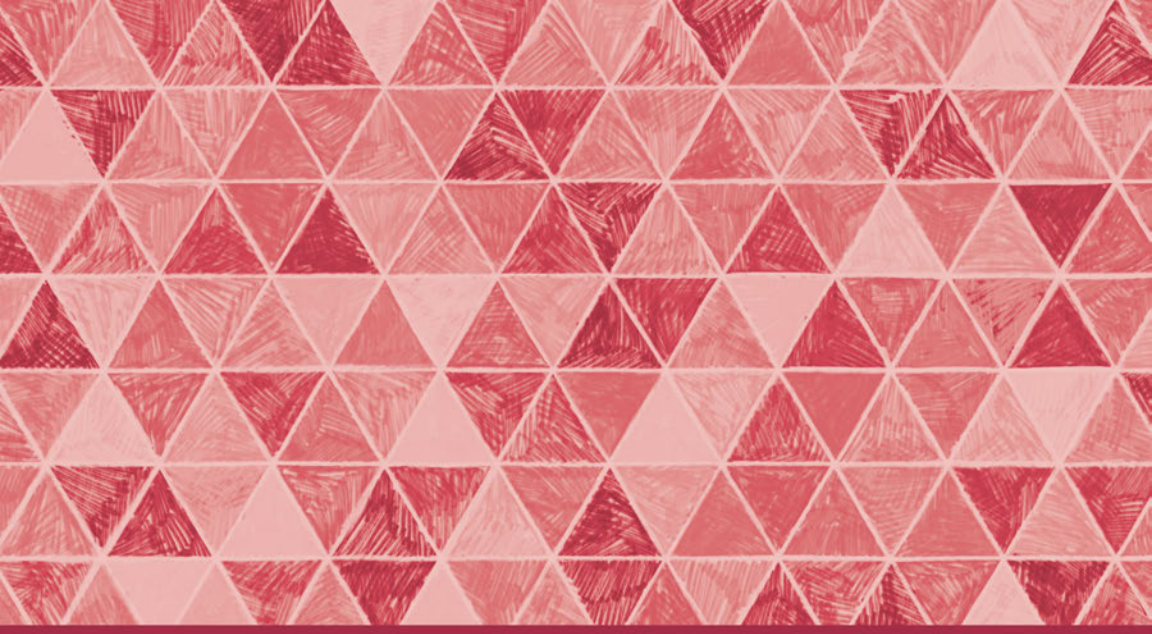

Studies in Philosophy and Theology in Late Antiquity

PLATONISM AND CHRISTIAN THOUGHT IN LATE ANTIQUITY

Edited by
Panagiotis G. Pavlos, Lars Fredrik Janby, Eyjólfur Kjalar Emilsson, and Torstein Theodor Tollefsen

Platonism and Christian Thought in Late Antiquity

Platonism and Christian Thought in Late Antiquity examines the various ways in which Christian intellectuals engaged with Platonism both as a pagan competitor and as a source of philosophical material useful to the Christian faith. The chapters are united in their goal to explore transformations that took place in the reception and interaction process between Platonism and Christianity in this period.

The contributions in this volume explore the reception of Platonic material in Christian thought, showing that the transmission of cultural content is always mediated, and ought to be studied as a transformative process by way of selection and interpretation. Some chapters also deal with various aspects of the wider discussion on how Platonic, and Hellenic, philosophy and early Christian thought related to each other, examining the differences and common ground between these traditions.

Platonism and Christian Thought in Late Antiquity offers an insightful and broad-ranging study on the subject, which will be of interest to students of both philosophy and theology in the Late Antique period, as well as anyone working on the reception and history of Platonic thought, and the development of Christian thought.

Panagiotis G. Pavlos is Research Fellow at the Department of Philosophy, University of Oslo, Norway. His main interests are Late Antique metaphysics, cosmology and the early Christian philosophical tradition, with an emphasis on their interaction. His doctoral dissertation examines the concept of aptitude (*epitēdeiotēs*) in Late Antique and Early Christian thought.

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Contents

Acknowledgements vii
List of contributors viii
List of abbreviations xi

Introduction 1
LARS FREDRIK JANBY, EYJÓLFUR KJALAR EMILSSON, TORSTEIN THEODOR TOLLEFSEN, AND PANAGIOTIS G. PAVLOS

PART I
Methodologies 15

1 The agreement of Christianity and Platonic philosophy from Justin Martyr to Eusebius 17
SÉBASTIEN MORLET

2 Augustine and the "prophecy" of Plato, *Tim.* 29c3 33
CHRISTINA HOENIG

3 Porphyry's daemons as a threat for the Christians 49
CHRISTINE HECHT

PART II
Cosmology 61

4 Patristic reflections on formless matter 63
ENRICO MORO

5 Plotinus' doctrine of badness as matter in *Ennead* I.8 [51] 78
EYJÓLFUR KJALAR EMILSSON

6 Proclus, Philoponus, and Maximus: the paradigm of the world and temporal beginning 100
TORSTEIN THEODOR TOLLEFSEN

PART III
Metaphysics 115

7 Christ and Pythagoras: Augustine's early philosophy of number 117
LARS FREDRIK JANBY

8 The impact of the Ὁμοούσιον on the divine ideas 129
DANIEL J. TOLAN

9 Theurgy in Dionysius the Areopagite 151
PANAGIOTIS G. PAVLOS

10 On the meaning of hierarchy in Dionysius the Areopagite 181
DIMITRIOS A. VASILAKIS

11 The doctrine of immanent realism in Maximus the Confessor 201
SEBASTIAN MATEIESCU

12 That and how *perichōrēsis* differs from participation: the case of Maximus the Confessor 220
JORDAN DANIEL WOOD

PART IV
Ethics 237

13 Apophaticism in the search for knowledge: love as a key difference in Neoplatonic and Christian epistemology 239
E. BROWN DEWHURST

14 The origin of passions in Neoplatonic and early Christian thought: Porphyry of Tyre and Evagrius Ponticus 258
ADRIAN PIRTEA

15 Augustine on eudaimonia as life project and object of desire 275
TOMAS EKENBERG

Index of Greek, Latin and Syriac words 289
Index of passages 293
Index of persons 305
Index of subjects 312

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Abbreviations

Series and editions

ANF	The Anti-Nicene Fathers
CAG	Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca
CCSG	Corpus Christianorum, Series Graeca
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina
CSEL	Corpus scriptorum ecclesiasticorum latinorum
GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte.
GNO	*Gregorii Nysseni opera*. Ed. Werner W. Jaeger et al. 10 Vols. Leiden: Brill, 1921–2009
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LSJ	*A Greek-English Lexicon*. Ed. Henry G. Liddell and Robert Scott. Revised by Sir Henry S. Jones. With a Revised Supplement. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996
PG	Patrologiae cursus completus: Series graeca. Ed. Jacques-Paul Migne. 162 vols. Paris: Imprimerie Catholique, 1857–1886
PL	Patrologiae cursus completus: Series latina. Ed. Jacques-Paul Migne. 217 vols. Paris: Imprimerie Catholique, 1844–1864
PTS	Patristische Texte und Studien
SBLGNT	*Greek New Testament*. Society of Biblical Literarure
SC	Sources chrétiennes
TLG	Thesaurus linguae grecae

Texts

(Only authors whose works appear frequently are abbreviated.)

AMBROSE

Exam.	*Exameron*

ARISTOTLE

Cat.	*Categoriae (Categories)*
EN	*Ethica Nicomachea (Nicomachean Ethics)*

Met.	*Metaphysica (Metaphysics)*
Phys.	*Physica (Physics)*
Pol.	*Politica (Politics)*

ATHANASIUS OF ALEXANDRIA

C. Ar.	*Contra Arianos (Against the Arians)*
C. Gent.	*Contra Gentes (Against the Heathen)*
Decr.	*De decretis (Defense of the Nicene Definition)*
Inc.	*De incarnatione Verbi Dei (On the Incarnation)*
Syn.	*De synodis (On the Synods)*

ATHENAGORAS

Leg.	*Legatio pro Christianis (Embassy for the Christians)*

AUGUSTINE

C. Faust.	*Contra Faustum Manichaeum (Against Faustus the Manichean)*
Civ. Dei	*De civitate Dei (The City of God)*
Conf.	*Confessiones (Confessions)*
Cons. ev.	*De consensu evangelistarum (On the Agreement of the Evangelists)*
Doctr. Chr.	*De doctrina christiana (On Christian Doctrine)*
Lib. arb.	*De libero arbitrio (On Free Will)*
Retr.	*Retractationes (Revisions)*
Trin.	*De Trinitate (On the Trinity)*

BASIL THE GREAT

Ep.	*Epistles*
Hex.	*Homiliae in Hexaëmeron (Homilies on the Six Days of Creation)*

CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA

Paed.	*Paedagogus (Christ the Educator)*
Pr.	*Protrepticus (Exhortation to the Greeks)*
Str.	*Stromateis (Stromata* or *Miscellanies)*

DIONYSIUS THE AREOPAGITE

CD	*Corpus Dionysiacum Areopagiticum*
DN	*De divinis nominibus (On the Divine Names)*
CH	*De caelesti hierarchia (On the Celestial Hierarchy)*
EH	*De ecclesiastica hierarchia (On the Ecclesiastical Hierarchy)*
MT	*De mystica theologia (On Mystical Theology)*
Ep.	*Epistulae (Letters)*

EUSEBIUS OF CAESAREA

PE	*Praeparatio evangelica (Preparation for the Gospel)*

EVAGRIUS

Cogit.	*De malignis cogitationibus (On Thoughts)*
Disc.	*Capita cic auctoribus discipulis Euagrii (Chapters of the Disciples of Evagrius)*
Eulog.	*Tractatus ad Eulogium (Treatise to Eulogius)*
Gnost.	*Gnosticus (The Gnostic* or *The One Worthy of Knowledge)*
KG	*Kephalaia Gnostica (Chapters on Knowledge)*
Oct. Spir.	*De octo spiritibus malitiae (On the Eight Spirits of Wickedness)*
Or.	*De oratione (Chapters on Prayer)*
Pract.	*Practicus (Treatise on the Practical Life)*
Schol. Iob	*Scholia in Iob (Scholia on Job)*
Schol. Prov.	*Scholia in Prouerbia (Scholia on Proverbs)*
Schol. Ps.	*Scholia in Psalmos (Scholia on Psalms)*

GREGORY OF NYSSA

In Hex.	*Apologia in Hexaemeron (Apology to the Six Days of Creation)*

IAMBLICHUS

De Myst.	*De mysteriis Aegyptiorum (On the Egyptian Mysteries)*

JOHN PHILOPONUS

Arbit.	*Arbitrator (Arbiter* or *Umpire)*
Contra Proclum	*De aeternitate mundi contra Proclum (Against Proclus' On the Eternity of the World)*
In Cat.	*In Aristotelis categorias commentarium (Commentary on Aristotle's Categories)*
In Phys.	*In Aristotelis physicorum octo libros commentaria (Commentary on Aristotle's Physics)*

JUSTIN MARTYR

Ap.	*Apologia (Apology)*
Dial.	*Dialogus cum Tryphone (Dialogue with Tryphone)*

MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR

Amb. Io.	*Ambigua ad Iohannem (Difficult Passages Addressed to John)*
Amb. Th.	*Ambigua ad Thomam (Difficult Passages Addressed to Thomas)*

Car.	*Capita de caritate (Centuries on Love)*
DP	*Disputatio cum Pyrrho (Dispute with Pyrrhus)*
Ep.	*Epistulae (Letters)*
Myst.	*Mystagogia (Mystagogy)*
Opusc.	*Opuscula theologica et polemica (Small Theological and Polemical Works)*
Or. dom.	*Expositio orationis dominicae (Commentary on the Lord's Prayer)*
Q. Thal.	*Quaestiones ad Thalassium (Questions Addressed to Thalassius)*
Th. oec.	*Capita theologica et oeconomica (Chapters on Theology and the Economy)*

ORIGEN

C. Cels.	*Contra Celsum (Against Celsus)*
Comm. in Io.	*Commentarium in Iohannem (Commentary on John)*
Comm. in Matt.	*Commentarium in Evangelium Matthaei (Commentary on Matthew)*
Dial. Her.	*Dialogus cum Heraclide (Dialogue with Heraclides)*
Hom. In Gen.	*Homiliae in Genesim (Genesis Homilies)*
Princ.	*De principiis (First Principles)*

PHILO OF ALEXANDRIA (JUDEAUS)

Immut.	*Quod Deus sit immutabilis (On the Unchangeableness of God)*
Leg. All.	*Legum allegoriae (Allegorical Interpretation)*
Migr.	*De migratione Abrahae (On the Migration of Abraham)*
Opif.	*De opificio mundi (On the Creation)*

PLATO

Gorg.	*Gorgias*
Leg.	*Leges (The Laws)*
Parm.	*Parmenides*
Phaed.	*Phaedo*
Phaedr.	*Phaedrus*
Phileb.	*Philebus*
Pol.	*Politicus (Statesman)*
Rep.	*De Republica (The Republic)*
Soph.	*Sophista (Sophist)*
Symp.	*Symposium*
Theaet.	*Theaetetus*
Tim.	*Timaeus*

PLOTINUS

Enn.	*Enneads*

PORPHYRY

Ad Marc.	*Ad Marcellam (Letter to Marcella)*
Comm. in Ptol. Harm.	*In Harmonica (Commentary on Ptolemy's Harmonics)*
De abst.	*De abstinentia (On Abstinence from Killing Animals)*
In Cat.	*In Categorias (Commentary in Aristotle's Categories)*
Isag.	*Isagoge (Introduction)*
Phil. ex orac.	*De philosophia ex oraculis haurienda (Philosophy from the Oracles)*
Sent.	*Sententiae ad intelligibilia ducentes (Starting-points leading to the Intelligibles)*
Vit. Pl.	*Vita Plotini (The Life of Plotinus)*

PROCLUS

De mal. subs.	*De malorum subsistentia (On the Existence of Evils)*
El. theol.	*Institutio theologica (The Elements of Theology)*
In Alcib.	*In Alcibiadem (Commentary on [Plato's] Alciviades I)*
In Parm.	*In Parmenidem (Commentary on Plato's Parmenides)*
In Remp.	*In rem publicam (Commentary on Plato's Republic)*
In Tim.	*In Timaeum (Commentary on Plato's Timaeus)*
Theol. Plat.	*Theologia Platonica (Platonic Theology)*

THEOPHILUS

Aut.	*Apologia ad Autolycum (Apology to Autolycus)*

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Introduction

Lars Fredrik Janby, Eyjólfur Kjalar Emilsson, Torstein Theodor Tollefsen, and Panagiotis G. Pavlos

This volume is about the complex relationship between Platonism and Christian thought in Late Antiquity. Rooted in the pagan world, Platonism was perceived by Christian intellectuals as a competitor to the faith in the religious and intellectual market, while also representing a rich source of philosophical material that could be appropriated in their own rational inquiries. Christian receptions of Platonism therefore oscillated between rejection and appropriation, and it is the inner workings of that multifaceted relationship which is the subject of this book. The chapters are united in their goal to explore transformations that took place in the reception and interaction process and to discuss aspects of the relationship between Platonism and Christianity in Late Antiquity. In dealing with cases of reception of Platonic material in Christian thought, the contributions of this volume show that transmission of cultural content is always mediated, and ought to be studied as transformations that occur by way of selections and interpretations. Exploring the transformations that took place in the reception of Platonism in early Christian thought, these chapters study various ways in which Christian intellectuals engaged with Platonism both as pagan competitors and as a source of philosophical material useful to the Christian faith. The contributions also deal with various aspects concerning the general discussion on how Platonic/Hellenic philosophy and early Christian thought related to each other, examining the differences and common ground between these traditions.

With the rise of Christianity in the Greco-Roman world and its increasing worldly success, it was perhaps inevitable that Christian intellectuals would engage with the schools of ancient philosophy. In fact, Christianity was from its very beginning embedded in the intellectual discourse of the Greco-Roman world. The use of philosophical terms and conceptions in Christian literature that originated with Hellenic culture is as old as the Christian movement itself. Beginning with the New Testament, early Christians used philosophical language to communicate their beliefs. Paul's speech on the Areopagus was for example an intervention into the discourse of the hegemonic intellectual milieu of the time, using philosophical discourse in order to make himself understood and to appear convincing to his audience of pagan intellectuals. Here we encounter for the first time the idea that the message of the faith could be translated

into a language, which until then had been the exclusive property of pagan intellectuals. If Paul's appeal was addressed to intellectuals outside the faith, later Christians would also engage with ancient philosophy for the sake of rational inquiries in their own right.

Among the philosophical schools of Antiquity, it was however with Platonism that early Christianity would experience its most creative and enduring intellectual encounters. The Christian receptions of Platonism were facilitated by their shared fortunes, as the formation of early Christian thought coincided with the revival of Plato's dogmatic philosophy in the first centuries CE. As Christianity gained a foothold in late ancient society, it also increasingly started to engage with the intellectual discourses of the Greco-Roman world – a world in which the late Platonic movement was becoming a leading intellectual force. While the Platonic movement interpreted and systematised the teachings of Plato, the Christian thought was intent on interpreting and systematising the faith. Both movements showed themselves to be open to appropriating material from other systems. Just as the Platonic movement integrated material from Stoic and Peripatetic philosophy, the intellectual inquiries of the Christian movement engaged with the philosophical traditions of the Greco-Roman world, in various ways. Christian receptions of Platonic philosophy were multifaceted, spanning from complete rejection to conditional approval. This complex relationship was not specific to Platonism, but reflects the attitudes of early Christian culture to Hellenic philosophy in general. We can therefore not speak of a uniform transmission from Platonism to Christianity, only a wide range of strategies employed when material was transported from one context to another. The chapters of this volume are case studies of this process. If our introduction lines up some of the methodological principles, case studies are required to explore the phenomenon in detail.

The concepts "influence" and "legacy" have been subjected to much criticism over the past few decades. This is because they may conceal the agency that necessarily is involved in appropriation. Whatever the intellectual legacy of ancient philosophy, reception necessarily includes an active interpretation of the appropriated material. There can have been no *direct* transmissions of that material, only transfers which necessarily involved selection and mediation from one context to another. In our view, Christian intellectuals ought therefore to be seen as agents of transmission in the reception process – an aspect which may become obscured when we speak about "influence" or "legacy." If the philosophical material that we discover in Christian texts can be identified as having a Platonic provenance, that material may appear in response to questions foreign to the Platonic tradition, for example situated in contexts that pertain to intellectual inquiries into the Christian faith or other issues motivated by a human, rational curiosity. Reception is therefore always already mediated since it is molded by the horizon of the receiver, bestowing a meaning upon the material determined by contexts. When used as a response to Christian questions, the Platonic material was re-situated and transformed in accordance with Christian values and purposes. To study the transfer of philosophical concepts and theories from

a pagan to a Christian context is to study how that material was transformed. Therefore, a number of contributions in this volume examine the *creative* aspects in which Christian thinkers engaged with Platonic material, exploring how the Platonic legacy was transformed in Christian contexts. In tracing this transmission, these contributions examine how a certain concept or doctrine changed meaning in the course of transmission, as it was uprooted from one context and placed into another – from the problems related to the Platonic worldview to the questions relevant to the Christian tradition. This methodology, analyzing the movement of material from one context to another (from a pagan to a Christian context), enables us to assess Christianity in relationship to Platonism. What did Christian intellectuals in Late Antiquity find useful in the Platonic tradition? Which changes did the material undergo with the swap of contexts? In turn, this approach also makes visible what Christian writers did *not* find to be of value in Platonism. What did Christians ignore or reject in the Platonic tradition? Reception studies are therefore expedient for inquiring into the dividing lines between paganism and Christianity.

Transformations aside, could the Christian appropriations of Platonic philosophy meaningfully be said to constitute a development of the Platonic tradition? In a famous essay, Heinrich Dörrie contended that Christian appropriation of Platonic material amounted to a de-platonisation.[1] According to Dörrie, in the cases where material was uprooted from a Platonic context and inserted into a Christian one, the essentials of Platonism were *eo ipso* purged, effectively accomplishing a de-platonisation in the process. We think, however, that Dörrie's claim rests on a somewhat narrow definition of what tradition is. Examining how Platonic material was continued and transformed in Christian contexts, we submit that this volume can also meaningfully be said to be a contribution to studies on the development of the Platonic tradition. It has occasionally been discussed in scholarly literature whether Platonic philosophers were receptive to influences from the Christian movement. It is however not development in *that* sense which we here refer to. Rather, we claim that Christian transformations of Platonic material itself amount to a development of the Platonic tradition. Tracing the "afterlife" of Platonic material in Christian writers is to explore how Platonism continued to be used in intellectual inquiries into subjects that were unknown to the Platonic philosophers. In several cases, Christians developed the Platonic tradition in new and unexpected ways, asking new questions to the tradition that they engaged with and using it for problem-solving that was unknown to the Platonists themselves. From this point of view, it can meaningfully be said that the Platonic tradition was subject to development from the Christians. In this way, Christian intellectuals contributed to transform and disseminate the Platonic tradition, transporting its material into new areas of intellectual thought. The appropriations would therefore be a development of the Platonic tradition, albeit within a Christian frame that could not identify itself with pagan philosophy. The receptions of Platonic material in Christian thought are therefore relevant to the studies of the development of both the Platonic and the Christian tradition.

Christian methodologies

Some observations on Christian intellectuals' *own* methodologies might also be in order here. First, there was no lack of endorsements of Platonic philosophy among early Christians, including acknowledgements that the Platonists had come close to the truth. Even the mature Augustine, for example, could claim that no other philosophical school had come closer to the Christian doctrine than the Platonists.[2] With such statements, the usefulness of Platonic doctrines and concepts were given an explicit endorsement. Based on the perceived similarities between Platonism and Christianity, Christian intellectuals also willingly appropriated Platonic material for their own purposes. But which methodological principles did they themselves use when engaging with the Platonic material; how did they reason about their appropriation of material from Platonic philosophers? This is the subject of Part I of this volume, which deals with Christian methodologies and rhetorical strategies in the encounters with Platonic material.

There was a long-standing Christian discourse on Hellenic culture that had established some methodological principles for how Christians rightfully could engage with pagan material and use it for their own ends. The arguably most famous expression of this methodology is found in the application of the verse in Exod 12:35–36, in which the Israelites were asked to plunder the silver, gold, and clothing of the Egyptians on their way to the promised land. According to these methodological principles, the truth necessarily belonged to Christianity, and therefore all truth rightfully had to be considered Christian truth. From the viewpoint of Christian intellectuals, the use of Platonic material was therefore not seen as appropriation, but was justified and explained as *re-appropriation*. Based on the principle of "fair use" (*usus iustus*), the intellectual heritage of Hellenic culture could be integrated into Christian culture with only small modifications.[3] From this perspective, Hellenic philosophy was still considered as lacking or false, but nonetheless, it justified the practice of using in their own rational inquiries elements from Hellenic philosophy that was perceived to be in agreement with Christian teachings. If something true was found in Plato or in the later Platonic tradition, then it had to be reckoned as a truth belonging to Christianity. Acknowledgement of Platonism was thus not an acknowledgement of intellectual debt, but a purification of truth from the falsehood of paganism. To appropriate material from a pagan context to a Christian one, was equal to removing any disturbing or false elements from the truth; to engage with Plato was to purify the unclean and put it into its appropriate context. In the first chapter of this volume, **Sébastien Morlet** inquires into this methodology of early Christian intellectuals, examining how key figures like Origen, Clement of Alexandria and Eusebius viewed the agreements and disagreements between Platonism and Christianity. This reveals the rich discourse established in early Christianity for how to deal with the apparent truths, which could be found in Platonic writings.

Another methodological strategy was that of casting Plato and his philosophy, which arguably had anteceded Christianity in the chronological order, as a "preparation" for the Gospels. Clement of Alexandria was one of the first writers to view

Hellenic philosophy as preparation for Christianity – the Greek philosophers had anteceded the Gospels, but only with Christ, the incarnated Word, did the truths of Hellenic philosophy find their fulfillment. This methodology effectively offered an intellectual resolution to the dual relationship toward the philosophical tradition: by being assigned a preparatory role, Hellenic philosophy was conceded a certain part in the truth, while at the same time being kept at a distance from the truth itself because it did not take part in Revelation. As preparation, Hellenic philosophy was never sufficient in itself, but would need Christianity for its partial truths to find their fulfillment. Christians could in this way acknowledge the achievements of rational analysis and the relative merits of Plato and the later Platonic tradition without conceding to Platonism knowledge of the essential truths, which only had been communicated to human beings with Revelation. In accordance with this strategy, Hellenic philosophy was incorporated within history, and Platonism could be given a position in preparing the ground for the Christian faith. Relegated to preparation and introduction, Hellenic philosophy would always remain outside of salvific knowledge. This methodology was suitable to justify the appropriation of philosophical material in a selective way, whenever something was found that was in accordance with the faith. In her chapter, **Christina Hoenig** explores the strategy employed by Augustine in using Plato as a pseudo-prophet against later Platonists. By reference to metaphysical and epistemological language from the *Timaeus*, Augustine argues that Plato anticipated the human-divine relationship that was revealed through the Gospel – a strategy by which, as Hoenig shows, Augustine pits Plato against the current-day Platonists who refuse to acknowledge the incarnated Word. Plato had perhaps not grasped the role of the mediator, but he evidently understood a lot more than his arrogant inheritors, Augustine argues.

We ought not to forget that there existed a relationship of competition between Platonism and Christianity in Late Antiquity – Platonism was not only perceived as a rival in intellectual matters that sometimes erred in its rational inquiries, but as a movement that itself had religious qualities (or at any rate was perceived to have such qualities in the religious landscape of the period). Platonic philosophy was committed to inquire by rational means into the principles of reality, but it also held these highest principles to be divine. Plotinus added an element of spiritual mysticism to his interpretation of Plato's philosophy, and later Neoplatonists only reinforced this vein of spiritual or religious sentiment to the Platonic tradition in Late Antiquity. Any modern bifurcation between philosophy and religion was non-existent, and hence Christians naturally perceived Platonism as a religious competitor. The Platonism of Late Antiquity must have been seen by Christians as a religion on its own, committed to a philosophy that offered salvation. Platonism might even have competed with Christianity on the universal salvation of human beings, as seen for example in the works of Porphyry.[4] The philosopher from Tyre remained a perennial foe to the Christian faith. In her chapter, **Christine Hecht** explores Eusebius' reception of Porphyry's daemonology. The daemons were a part of the inventory of the classical world that caused much distress to the Christian system – Christ had of course come to break the chains

of the daemons and free human beings from their evil influence. Hecht shows the rhetorical aims involved in Eusebius' representation of Porphyry's daemonology, which often distorted what seem to have been the philosopher's original claims about the daemons.

What did Christians find useful in Platonism?

In general terms, Platonism had an *enabling effect* on the early Christian tradition. It was enabling in the sense that it provided Christians with an intellectual apparatus that allowed for new and advanced interpretations of beliefs and doctrines, providing a philosophical system consisting of terms and conceptions that could be integrated as means to interpretations and problem-solving within the faith. This claim is of course, to some degree or another, valid for all ancient schools of philosophy, and there were certainly also other philosophical traditions that made their influence on early Christian thought, such as Stoicism, for example. However, it is likely correct to say that among the philosophical schools of Antiquity, it was with the Platonic tradition that Christian intellectuals enjoyed the most creative and enduring relationship. A correspondence between Plato's philosophy and the Christian religion was observed by several Christian thinkers in Late Antiquity. Augustine could even claim that the extent of agreement between two movements was so large that the difference mainly was a matter of words.[5] Sympathetic reading of Plato's writings could extend further than expected, surprisingly even into areas of Christian doctrine in which there was widespread acknowledgement that Platonic philosophy diverged from the faith: in his *Stromateis*, for example, Clement of Alexandria speculated that the myth of Er in Plato's *The Republic* is an allusion to the resurrection of the body;[6] Justin Martyr was even willing to believe that the letter chi (X) which Plato in the *Timaeus* held to be the shape of the world soul, was a reference to the cross of Christ.[7]

Within which areas of philosophy were early Christians most likely to perceive common ground with the Platonists? It seems that the observation of a widespread appropriation of Platonic philosophy in Christian thought requires an explanation. How do we explain the relative appeal of Platonism to Christian thought? What was it about Platonic philosophy – in comparison to other philosophical schools in antiquity – that made it seem so useful to Christians in their intellectual inquiries? Evidence suggests that metaphysics is the area in which early Christians tended to find the most extensive agreements between the faith and Platonic philosophy.[8] What the two movements have in common is the belief that the world depends on the absolute reality of a divine being, since also Christians could think of the principles of the cosmos as keeping place in an invisible realm unavailable to the senses. The Platonic doctrine that there is a primary reality that exists prior to the physical world that we can apprehend with our senses, was easily integrated into the Christian distinction between God the creator and the created world, although there were differences in how they saw generation or creation to have taken place. Adopting Platonic discourse, Christians acquired a way to articulate the chasm between Creator and creation by using distinctions

such as invisible/visible, permanence/becoming, and the novel uncreated/created, essence/activity.

More broadly, Christianity did find much common ground with the metaphysical inquiries of ancient philosophy. Ancient philosophy had always been committed to inquire into the principles of reality, and this was a philosophical discourse into which Christian intellectuals willingly entered. One of the main objections against Hellenic philosophy was the status of the cosmos, which Christians held to have been created from nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*) with a temporal beginning. In their arguments against the Hellenic philosophers, Christian intellectuals attempted to show that the principle of reality that the philosophers had been searching for is the Christian God, who is the ultimate cause that has generated the cosmos. Here, however, Christian interpreters could find a philosophical ally in Plato. Christian engagement with Platonist metaphysics had Plato's *Timaeus* as its main text – the work had a formidable history of reception in Christian literature, which was anticipated by Philo of Alexandria, who already had made use of the *Timaeus* in his interpretation of Genesis.[9] For later Christian writers too, the cosmogonic explanation given in the *Timaeus* largely agreed with the creation account in Genesis. In the cosmogonic account presented in the *Timaeus*, the demiurge is held to be the superior principle of generation, shaping the cosmos after the Forms. Its goodness is not inherent to the cosmos itself, but arranged from the outside. In the Christian perception, the *Timaeus* story nicely fitted with the key doctrine that the cosmos is created – and not eternal, as ancient philosophy otherwise would have it to be. While there were various interpretations of the demiurge within the Platonic tradition, Christians agreed with the idea that the cosmos is generated by a divine principle, that is, an active principle of generation, which otherwise could not be found in the other philosophical schools. According to this interpretation of the cosmogony in the *Timaeus*, Christians could establish common ground with Platonism with regard to the generation of the world.

Part II of the volume is focused on cosmology. Beside philosophical inquiries into the fundamental principles of reality, cosmology in the Platonic tradition also dealt with matter. Being either a preexisting something or the last phase of emanation void of form, matter remained somewhat of an "embarrassment" to the spiritual and moral aspirations of the Platonic philosopher, but none the less a subject worthy of analysis. Moreover, it held an indisputable position within the Platonic movement, since Plato had dealt with matter in the *Timaeus* – although in a way that left much room for interpretations by the later tradition. Matter was also subject to reception in early Christian thought, as shown by **Enrico Moro** in "Patristic reflections on formless matter." The doctrine of creation had a prominent standing within Christian theology. Christians did of course take a positive view on creation, which they held to be the product of the creator God in Genesis. But where did matter fit in this picture? Moro analyses the Platonic concept of prime matter in early Christian thought, showing how this concept could be employed in inquiries into Genesis and the creation of the world, enabling new interpretations of Scripture. However, reception can differ from the original: in his chapter "Plotinus' doctrine of badness as matter in *Ennead* I 8 (51)," **Eyjólfur Kjalar**

Emilsson examines Plotinus' claim that matter is absolute badness. Plotinus held that matter, since it is devoid of form, being and goodness, must be responsible for bad things for living bodies, such as illness, poverty, and vice in souls. The chapter discusses Plotinus' explanation as to how badness is related to matter, and moreover puts into perspective the receptions that Moro analyses in the preceding chapter (as well as other aspects of Christian reception of Plotinus).[10]

One of the fundamental divergences between Platonism and Christian thought is the question about the provenance of the world. For the Platonist, the cosmos is eternal, and any notion of creation would amount to nothing other than the formation of a preexisting material. In other words, for the Platonists the basic principle of cosmology is "order out of chaos." For the Christian, though, the cosmos was not always there. It has been created out of nothing. Implicit at the beginnings of Christianity, or explicit after the contributions of the Cappadocians, the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* established one of the central distinctions between Platonic and Christian thought. This issue is treated by **Torstein Theodor Tollefsen**, who compares the cosmological doctrines of the Neoplatonist Proclus with the Christian doctrine of John Philoponus and Maximus the Confessor. For the Neoplatonists the world has always existed, since the paradigm, according to which it is created, is eternal. Against this view, the Christians claimed that the world has a beginning a definite number of time-units ago. The world is created from nothing, by the will of God, and it is created "recently," as said by Maximus. Tollefsen's chapter has two foci: The author treats first the Alexandrine Christian philosopher John Philoponus' critique of the Neoplatonist Proclus' cosmology. Then he focuses on Maximus the Confessor's doctrine of creation and asks whether one may detect any influence on Maximus from Philoponus.

Part III of the volume contains chapters addressing Christian receptions of Platonic metaphysics. **Lars Fredrik Janby** examines the philosophy of number in Augustine's early works. The chapter argues that this aspect of Augustine's philosophy must be read in context with the intellectual problems that occupied him at the beginning of his career as a writer. To that effect, the chapter considers the conceptual pair sensible and intelligible number, and its relation to the idea that the transient physical world reflects immutable, eternal unity. The chapter also investigates the fortunes of Augustine's philosophy of number in later writings, inquiring into how his perceptions about cognition of number changed. In his chapter, **Daniel J. Tolan** examines the role of the doctrine of the divine ideas in Christian and Platonic orthodoxy. Tolan shows how divine exemplarism was useful in defending divine simplicity, allowing Christian intellectuals to consider the created world as a temporal image of divine ideas, which are outside of time. Tolan's chapter draws on a number of sources to investigate the development of this doctrine and the various intellectual issues it confronted, including Plato's *Timaeus*, Philo of Alexandria, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Plotinus and, finally, Athanasius.

Panagiotis G. Pavlos' chapter aims at offering insights on Dionysius the Areopagite's notion of theurgy. Pavlos takes over the remark that despite the linguistic affinities and terminological appropriations – whether Iamblichean or Procline – Dionysius' premises on the matter remain radically different from that

of Neoplatonism, both in terms of the sacramental tradition he recapitulates and the wider Christian metaphysical contours he adheres to. He examines Dionysian theurgy both with respect to the metaphysical principles that connect with θεουργία and the particular sacramental reality that emerges from it. **Dimitrios A. Vasilakis** examines the notion of hierarchy in Dionysius the Areopagite. In contrast to its modern usage, Dionysian hierarchy does not primarily refer to stratification or rank of power. Vasilakis focuses on the definition of hierarchy from Dionysius' *Celestial Hierarchy* with the aid of relevant passages from the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*. He explains how hierarchy relates to order, i.e. in what way hierarchy is a well-ordered system of entities, where one can indeed detect stratification. Through this ordering the higher entities (in the case of the Church: the hierarchs, the priests and their deacons) help the lower ones (the laity) to reach God, i.e. deification, as far as possible to each of them, through the sacraments of the Church. Hierarchy's last trait is understanding, which should not be understood merely intellectually, but erotically, as Vasilakis shows.

The Neoplatonist reception and development of Aristotelian logic had a great impact on Christian thought. **Sebastian Mateiescu**'s chapter focuses on how this kind of logic served the theologians especially in the Christological controversy. Theological inquiries into the philosophical problem of the universals grew after the Council of Chalcedon (451). Maximus the Confessor presented an alternative to nominalism with respect to the species that the Miaphysite/anti-Chalcedonian theologians shared with several philosophers. As Mateiescu argues, this alternative can be labelled immanent realism. Influenced by Ps.-Dionysius the Areopagite, Maximus innovatively combines principles within logic and metaphysics in elaborating this doctrine. It is well known that participation is a central concept in Neoplatonist as well as in Christian systems of thought. However, in his chapter **Jordan Daniel Wood** shows that the Christians, *in casu* Maximus the Confessor, needed to develop this notion of how entities relate to one another with the idea of *perichōrēsis* or mutual interpenetration. This topic is especially relevant for issues in Christology and the Christian doctrine of deification. On the background of Cappadocian trinitarian theology and Christology, Maximus elaborates a perichoretic logic that pertains to the relation between God and the world in eschatology (i.e. deification), effectuating an identity that goes beyond the Neoplatonic participation.

While receptions of metaphysics and cosmology perhaps were more frequent, there are interesting issues related to the field of moral theory as well when studying the intersection between Platonism and Christian thought. Any Platonic proclivity to value the sensible world lower than the higher realm could moreover be paired with Christian moralists' call to contempt for the pleasures of this world, since both valued the physical world lower than the eternal, invisible source on which it depends. Part IV of the volume covers aspects of Christian moral theory in relation to Platonism. **E. Brown Dewhurst** compares notions of knowledge of the divine in the works of Maximus the Confessor and Proclus. Contrasting different aspects of their thought such as nature, providence, and apophaticism in relation to knowledge, the chapter concludes that knowledge for Maximus always

is rooted in relationality – a notion which is rather absent in the Neoplatonic philosopher. A fundamental difference between Proclus and Maximus in this respect is found to be notable in the way that divine disclosure of knowledge bridges the gap between God and human beings in Maximus' theology. It is above all the union of Christ's humanity and divinity, the chapter argues, which makes the quest for knowledge into a relationship of love with the divine that is incompatible with Proclus' metaphysics. **Adrian Pirtea** examines the formation of passions in Porphyry and Evagrius, exploring some possible connections between the philosophical treatises of Plotinus' illustrious student and the ascetic writings of the Christian ascetic author. Porphyry has rarely been considered as a source of Christian ethics, but through a close reading of key passages in their works, Pirtea argues that Evagrius' theory of passions has much in common with the philosopher from Tyre – more so than with the Stoics, which often have been held to be the source of this theory. As Pirtea shows, both Porphyry and Evagrius show an interest in explaining how the passions originate from the soul's involvement with the sensible realm by using Platonic and Aristotelic psychology. Even Evagrius' concept of *apatheia*, the chapter argues, seems to be closer to the Neoplatonic understanding of freedom from passions than that of the Stoics. In the final chapter of the volume, **Tomas Ekenberg** discusses whether Augustine's notion of the happy life in fact agrees with that of the Epicureans. Augustine is one of the Christian intellectuals that frequently is cast as a "Christian Platonist" in scholarly literature, but despite all his appropriations and explicit endorsement of Platonism, he sometimes departs from their philosophy in ways that can be unexpected. Defending his claim, Ekenberg contends that the many positive valuations of pleasure in Augustine ought to be accounted for, and argues that his position is more similar to the Epicureans' than any other philosophical school in Antiquity.

Irreconcilable differences

How far did Christian receptions of Platonism extend? Let us first consider the expression "Christian Platonism," which frequently occurs in scholarship, and which suggests something like a synthesis forged between Christianity and Platonism in Late Antiquity. As a historical claim, it seems to be supported by the widespread appropriation of Platonic material that one finds in Christian writings. We submit, however, that any such claim about a historical fusion or synthesis between the two movements is misguiding. Despite the extent of these appropriations, we need as historians of philosophy to acknowledge that Christian integration of Platonism had its limitations. Unconditional approval of Platonism is after all not possible to find in any Christian writer from this period. On the contrary, evidence indicates that even the most sympathetic Christians always had some reservations about Platonism – including Christian writers who were inclined to integrate larger portions of Platonic philosophy in their thought. Augustine for example, despite all his enthusiasm for the discovery of the Platonic treatises that prompted his conversion, always dissociated himself from those of the Neoplatonist claims that went contrary to the faith, even in the fledgling years of his career, when he had but an elementary understanding of Christian doctrines.[11]

In this regard, Dörrie has claimed that any historical analysis of Christian receptions of Platonism should recognize the *differences* and *boundaries* which Christians perceived between their own views and those of the Platonists.[12] According to Dörrie's argument, the essential doctrines of the Platonic movement were all rejected by Christians. To take one of Dörrie's examples, Nicene Christians could impossibly accept any doctrine which stratified the divinity – such a doctrine was however essential to Neoplatonic metaphysics. Christian reception was therefore never substantial; it was limited to fragments and pieces that were incorporated into Christian thought. The observation of such irreconcilable differences between Platonism and Christianity led Dörrie to the conclusion that not only was there never such a thing as Christian Platonism in this period – according to him, there was only a Christian "anti-Platonism." While the latter may be a somewhat exaggerated claim, we think Dörrie is correct to the extent that despite widespread sympathy, no Christian writer from this period gave their full endorsement to the Platonists or completely adopted Platonic philosophy. From the Christian view, there was always a chasm separating the faith from paganism, and wherever there was endorsement, there was only conditional endorsement – which made any hypothetical "Christian Platonism" impossible. Christian intellectuals were understandably wary of endorsing Platonism – and, in cases of endorsement only did so by adding cautious disclaimers. Notwithstanding the truths it was held to communicate, Platonism was always held at a distance from the truth itself. From this perspective, there always remained a basic flaw about the Platonic system in the eyes of Christians since, despite their achievements within rational inquiries, the Platonists had been ignorant of or neglected Revelation.

The history of philosophy in Late Antiquity cannot exclusively be described in terms of continuities.[13] Cracks and ruptures in the transitions of the Greco-Roman world in this period are as much part of this history as the continuities, if we are to give a correct representation of the period. The editors of this volume do not believe that the many observations of appropriation of Platonic material justify any claim that early Christianity forged a synthesis with Platonism. Further studies into Christian receptions of Platonism in Late Antiquity will bring more knowledge about how Christian writers mediated that material by way of selections and interpretations. These cracks have their rightful place in the history as well – late ancient history is not to be regarded as an intellectual relay in which Christians transmitted what the genius of the Greeks had invented. Such cracks and ruptures cannot only be studied in the polemics of Christian writers against paganism – they can also be observed and studied in any reception of pagan material by inquiring into how that material was transformed when transported into Christian contexts. What we study when we study the receptions of Platonism is necessarily excerpts that were taken from one context and placed into another. In Christian contexts, the philosophical material was interpreted from new perspectives, with new meaning being added.

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In selecting the chapters contained in this volume on the relationship between Platonism and Christian thought, we have not wanted to outline any particular

historical development, and any sketch of the history of Christian philosophy in this period has been beyond the scope of this volume.[14] With the aim to explore the relationship between Platonism and Christianity in Late Antiquity, we have been interested in Christian thought broadly defined, and not necessarily Christian *philosophical* receptions. This is not to say that we do not think that there was such a thing as Christian philosophy in this period. In the course of the last few decades, the study of Christian philosophy in Late Antiquity has increased in scholarship, obliterating some of the old bifurcation between philosophy and religion/theology, and important contributions have provided new knowledge about how we meaningfully can speak about early Christian philosophy, such as Georgios Karamanolis and his *The Philosophy of Early Christianity*. In making this provision, we do still acknowledge that a number of contributions in this volume examine receptions which deal with what must be considered philosophical problems in their own right, in discussing the receptions of Platonic material within rational inquiries into the faith.

Notes

1 Dörrie 1976.
2 Augustine, *Civ. Dei* 8.5.
3 Cf. Gnilka 1984.
4 Cf. Bland Simmons 2015.
5 Augustine, *Conf*. 7.9.13.
6 Clement, *Str*. 5.103.
7 Justin, *Ap*. 1.60.1.
8 Cf. De Vogel 1985.
9 Cf. Runia 1968.
10 For example, these findings call into question established knowledge on Augustine's intellectual conversion. Augustine's claim in *Conf.* that he acquired his notion of evil from the Platonists' monistic view of reality (generally believed to have been Plotinus) does not sit well with the dualistic views that Plotinus held, as shown by his doctrine on matter, which hardly could find any place within mainstream Christian doctrine on creation.
11 Cf. Augustine, *Contra Academicos* 3.20.43.
12 Dörrie 1976: 522.
13 Dörrie 1976: 521–522.
14 We agree with Stead 1994: x, who argues that any sketch of the development of Christian philosophy in this period is made difficult by the lack of convergence in philosophical knowledge and preferences among early Christian intellectuals.

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Part I

Methodologies

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1 The agreement of Christianity and Platonic philosophy from Justin Martyr to Eusebius

Sébastien Morlet

The aim of this chapter is not to illustrate the impact of Platonism on Christianity,[1] but to concentrate on the way in which the early Christian Greek-speaking writers themselves conceived their relationship to Plato's thought, from Justin Martyr (second century), the first writer who explicitly compared Plato and Christianity, to Eusebius of Caesarea, at the beginning of the fourth century, whose work contains the first preserved systematic comparison between Plato and Scripture and the first quotations from Plotinus.[2]

There are two opposite views on Plato in the early Christian texts. A first series of texts presents Plato as a philosopher who failed to find the truth. Tatian, between 165 and 172,[3] accuses him of plagiarising Pythagoras and Pherecydes.[4] Theophilus attacks him for considering matter as a principle,[5] and for holding to a materialistic conception of the Gods.[6] Tertullian criticises his doctrine of the soul.[7] "Hippolytus"[8] considers Plato's philosophy as a possible source of heresy. According to this line of thought, Plato is just a Greek among other Greeks and simply illustrates, as a Greek, the failure of Hellenism.

Contrary to this hostile view on Plato, a second category of texts presents him as the philosopher who best approached the truth. Relating his supposed spiritual curriculum, Justin, at the beginning of the *Dialogue with Trypho*, writes that he first met a Stoic, then a Peripatetic, a Pythagorean, and finally a Platonist, before converting to Christianity.[9] Whether historical or not, this narrative suggests a hierarchy between the different philosophical schools: Platonism is explicitly ranked just before Christianity and, in Justin's narrative, plays the role of an introduction to Christianity. To that end, Justin describes the doctrines which he admired in Plato's thought: "And the perception of immaterial things quite overpowered me, and the contemplation of ideas furnished my mind with wings, so that in a little while I supposed that I had become wise."[10] This judgement on Plato will be shared by subsequent writers. Constantine, in his *Oration to the Saints*, describes Plato as a philosopher "superior to all the others, and who was the first to get the thoughts of men used to raise from the sensible realities to the intelligible ones, those which always remain the same, and who taught to raise the eyes to the realities above."[11] Eusebius, at the same period, describes Plato as "the greatest Greek philosopher,"[12] anticipating Augustine's judgement about the Platonists – "None came nearer to us than these."[13]

The agreement of Plato and the Christians from Justin to Eusebius

The first Christian writer who explicitly postulated an agreement between Christians and Plato is Justin. In chapter 24 of his *Apology* addressed to Antoninus c.150–155, Justin suggests a general concord between the Christians and the Greeks ("though we say *the same things* as what the Greeks say, we only are hated on account of the name of Christ"[14]). But this agreement, which is primarily an agreement of the poets and the philosophers with Christianity, is reduced, in Justin's concrete apologetical practice, to some very few points. Among the philosophers, the name of Plato is the most frequently quoted. Like the Christians, Justin says, Plato believed that the wicked souls will be punished in the afterlife[15] and that the soul will survive the death of the body.[16] The letter khi (X) used by the Demiurge in the *Timaeus* would be an echo of the Cross[17] and the *Letter* 2 312d–e, about the three kings,[18] would contain an indication on the Trinity.[19] Finally, Plato excluded the poets from his ideal state,[20] which would demonstrate, according to Justin, that he rejected polytheism. In other words, Justin praises Plato for (1) his doctrine of God, (2) his conception of the soul and (3) for what he sees as a rejection of polytheism.

The second writer who engages in a comparison between Plato and the Christians is Athenagoras. His *Plea for the Christians*, possibly written around 177, appears to be strongly inspired by Justin. Like his predecessor, he tries to base his argument on a few common doctrines between the poets and the philosophers. In the case of Plato, these common doctrines are:

- The conception of God (one, uncreated and creator: quotation of *Tim*. 28c), distinct from other gods (quotation of *Tim*. 41a).[21]
- The existence of a judgement after death (allusion to *Gorg*. 523c–524a).[22]
- The conception of the world as perishable (quotation of *Pol*. 269d).[23]
- The difference between the sensible and the intelligible (quotation of *Tim*. 27d).[24]
- The difference between the true one God and the demons (quotation of *Tim*. 40de and *Letter* 2).[25]
- The resurrection[26] – "for nothing hinders, according to Pythagoras and Plato, that when the dissolution of bodies takes place, they should, from the very same elements of which they were constructed at first, be constructed again"[27] (this is a very vague allusion, probably derived from the "Myth of Er").

It is obvious that Athenagoras follows the path opened by Justin. Like his predecessor, he praises Plato basically for (1) his doctrine of God and (2) his doctrine of the soul, but he also alludes to more specific points (the difference between different kinds of gods, and between sensible/intelligible) and he often gives precise *quotations* from Plato, where Justin, most of time, gives summaries or allusions.[28]

The next writer who frequently praises Plato for his proximity to Christianity is Clement of Alexandria (c.150–c.215). Like Justin and Athenagoras, he mentions

his doctrine of God,[29] his conception of the generation of the world,[30] his conception of the demons.[31] *Letter* 2 would indicate the Trinity[32] and the "Myth of Er," the resurrection.[33] But Clement's approach is innovative in at least two respects. First, he appears to have a much wider knowledge of Plato than Justin and Athenagoras. His work contains so many allusions to the philosopher that it would be impossible here to give a complete list. This knowledge of Plato induces him to include in the comparison of Plato and Christianity not only physical topics, but also ethical ones. Plato's condemnation of the voluptuous life (*Letter* 7 326bc), for instance, "relights," he says, "the spark of the Hebrew philosophy."[34] When Plato suggests that it is the sage who is rich (cf. *Phaedr*. 279bc, *Laws* 742e), he was in agreement with Scripture.[35]

The second innovation in Clement consists in the way he sometimes presents Plato as an *interpreter* of Christian doctrines. In *Str*. 1, he insists on the fact that philosophy and Greek culture in general must be used to understand Scripture.[36] Commenting on a passage from the *Laws* (906a), he writes that Plato has "explicitly showed" what the Apostle says (Eph 6:12).[37] In another passage, he says that Plato "interprets" (ἑρμηνεύει) the Jewish Law.[38] In a famous passage of *Theaetetus* 176b ("to become like God"), Clement finds a rephrasing of Deut 13:5 ("Follow the Lord your God") and concludes: "The Law calls the 'likeness' 'following'."[39] Clement is here at the starting point of a Christian tradition which saw Plato as a philosophical *equivalent* of Scripture, enabling the commentator to rephrase and to decipher the hidden meaning of the Bible.

This close conciliation of Plato and Scripture has two consequences in Clement's work. First, it induces Clement to present Christian doctrines as a philosophy, not only in the broader sense, but also in the technical sense. In *Str*. 5.93.4, for instance, he writes: "The barbarian philosophy knows the world of thought and the world of sense – the former archetypal, and the latter the image of that which is called the model."[40] This passage clearly attributes to Christianity, here referred to as "barbarian philosophy," the philosophical doctrines *of Plato*.

The second consequence, conversely, consists in presenting Plato as an inspired thinker, like the prophets, that is to say to include him in the history of Revelation. He announces like a prophet (καταμαντεύεται) the Lord's day when he speaks about the eighth day (*Rep*. 616b).[41] He "almost prophesies" (μονονουχὶ προφητεύων) Christ's Passion when he alludes to what will become of the Just (*Rep*. 361e4-a1).[42] In *Str*. 6, Clement assimilates a few Greek writers to the Jewish prophets: "For that, as God wished to save the Jews by giving to them prophets, so also by raising up prophets of their own in their own tongue, as they were able to receive God's beneficence, He distinguished the most excellent of the Greeks from the common herd."[43] In *Str*. 1 and 6, Clement presents philosophy as a divine gift, a "Testament" given by God, aimed, like the Jewish Testament, at preparing humankind for Christianity.[44] In short, Clement integrates more deeply Greek philosophy and Revelation: Revelation becomes a philosophy (essentially Platonic in content), and philosophy (especially Platonic philosophy) becomes a revelation.

After Clement and before Eusebius, we must deal with the important work of Origen (c.184–c.254).[45] Remarks on philosophy may be found throughout his writings, but two works deserve a special mention here: the lost *Stromateis*, first, and the *Contra Celsum*. In both works, Origen engaged in a discussion on Platonism, but from two different perspectives. The *Stromateis* seem to have been composed in Alexandria around 222–225, viz. the first period of Origen's scholarly life.[46] Very few fragments and testimonies have survived.[47] Jerome tells us that the work included a comparison between the opinions of the Christians and the opinions of the philosophers, and that Origen intended to confirm Christian doctrines with the help of Plato, Aristotle, Numenius and Cornutus.[48] It is difficult to know in what respect this work may owe something to Clement's own *Stromateis*. Jerome's testimony might indicate that Origen continued Clement's attempt to show the harmony of philosophy and Christianity, but maybe in a more systematical and explicit way. The very few extant fragments do not enable us to know more. It seems that at least the topic of resurrection was dealt with.[49] It is thus possible that Origen, on this topic, mentioned the Myth of Er, traditionally used by his predecessors as a text on resurrection. A fragment given by Jerome indicates that Origen also dealt with the Platonic idea that the guardians may lie for the safety of the state, with a reference to *Rep*. 389b.[50] But it is unclear to which Christian doctrine this conception about lying was compared.

In 1975, Henri Dominique Saffrey suggested that the comparison between Plato and Scripture included in Eusebius' *Praeparatio evangelica* may in part be derived from Origen's *Stromateis*.[51] In 2004,[52] I tried to sustain this view thanks to a very close parallel between the fragment of the *Stromateis* dealing with the possibility to lie, and one passage from Eusebius, where the same idea is connected to the fact that Scripture lies for the benefit of the less advanced readers when it describes God as a human being.[53] If my analysis is correct, then it is possible that Origen, like Eusebius, confronted the Platonic view on lie with the fact that the legislator, Moses, also lied for pedagogical purposes. In a more recent article (2013), I tried to show that two other chapters from the *Praeparatio evangelica* may derive from the lost *Stromateis*: in *PE* 11.12, Eusebius compares the Biblical view on God as ineffable (because his name cannot be uttered) with Plato's conception of God (from *Letter* 7 341cd); in *PE* 11.6, he confronts what he calls "the rightness of the Hebrew names" (that is to say the way God's names, but also the Hebrew letters, have *a reason* and express *something*) with Plato's conception of language (Cratylus' conception in the *Cratylus*).[54] Origen's *Stromateis* may well have contained the most complete comparison between Plato and Scripture of Antiquity, but its loss forbids us from being too assertive.

The *Contra Celsum* took up again the traditional idea of an agreement between Christianity and Plato, especially in books 5 to 7. The topics dealt with are as follows:

- Resurrection (Myth of Er? = *C. Cels*. 5.20–21)
- The heavenly city (*Rep*. 369–372; 427–434 = *C. Cels*. 5.43)
- The Good as ineffable (*Letter* 7 341 cd = *C. Cels*. 6.3–4)

- The Good flows like an illumination of the soul (*ibid*. = *C. Cels*. 6.3–4)
- There exist esoteric doctrines (*Letter* 7 341d = *C. Cels*. 6.6)
- Dialectics (*Letter* 7 344b = *C. Cels*. 6.7)
- The irrational faith (*Letter* 7 341c = *C. Cels*. 6.10)
- Human wisdom and divine wisdom (*Letter* 6 322dc = *C. Cels*. 6.12–13)
- Humility before God (*Laws* 715e – 716a = *C. Cels*. 6.15)
- The Trinity (*Letter* 2 312e – 313a = *C. Cels*. 6.17–19)
- The supra-celestial place (*Phaedr*. 247c = *C. Cels*. 6.19)
- The souls' way in heaven (*Phaedr*. 248ce; *Tim*. 41d – 42e = *C. Cels*. 6.21)
- The deluge (*Tim*. 22d = *C. Cels*. 6.58)
- Precious stones and the superior earth (*Phaed*. 109b – 110de = *C. Cels*. 7.30
- Sensible and intelligible realities (*Phaed*. 109de = *C. Cels*. 7.31)

It is obvious that apart from a few common places (resurrection, the Trinity), this comparison stems from a personal and direct reading of lengthy passages of Plato: *Letter* 7, *Phaedrus* 247–248, and *Phaedo* 109–110 especially. It includes primarily physical, but also ethical themes (humility before God, human wisdom) and topics related to what was called "logic" in the imperial era, viz. the philosophical method (esotericism and dialectics). In that respect, we may say that Origen widened the scope of the comparison. For the first time, the so-called "three parts" of Platonic philosophy are taken into account in a comparison with Christian doctrines.

Eusebius (260/265–339/340) followed the same pattern and extended it. Regardless of whether they were inspired by Origen's *Stromateis*, books 11 to 13 of the *Praeparatio evangelica* represent the most complete comparison of Plato and Scripture, which has been transmitted to us. It was influential enough to inspire Theodoret's *Therapeutics* and Cyril's *Contra Julianum* in the fifth century. The most striking feature of this comparison, compared to Eusebius' predecessors, is its systematic form. The comparison is composed of several chapters, *kephalaia*, corresponding to precise topics. These topics follow a systematic line, starting with logic,[55] physics[56] and eventually ethics.[57] This structure corresponds to the expository method displayed in the Platonic handbooks (see for instance Alcinoos[58] and Diogenes Laertius[59]). It is obvious that Eusebius designed his comparison to be a handbook in itself, a compendium of Platonic philosophy, focused on the major topics, and systematically compared with Scripture – a handbook of "Christianised" Platonism, in a way. In each chapter, one or several texts from Plato are compared to one or several texts from the Bible. Sometimes, Eusebius may add to Plato's texts quotations from more recent Platonists (Plutarch, Atticus, Numenius, Amelius, Plotinus, Porphyry) whom he presents as "exegetes" of Plato, "interpreting" (διερμηνεύων)[60] or "explaining" (ἐπὶ πλεῖον ἐξαπλῶν)[61] Plato's doctrine.

By this comparison, Plato's philosophy is re-read and re-arranged according to a Christian logic, based on the most prominent aspects of Christian faith: the one God,[62] the second person of the Trinity,[63] the demons,[64] the Judgement,[65] the resurrection of the Dead[66] and several aspects of Christian life and ethics: the practice

of virtue,[67] the ideal of poverty,[68] the prohibition of theft,[69] the rejection of the Greek gods,[70] to take a few examples. Conversely, Eusebius ascribes to Christian faith specific Platonic doctrines – the ideas,[71] for instance – and introduces the Church as the perfect achievement of Plato's constitution, as described in the *Republic* and the *Laws* – the rules about the leaders,[72] the practice of hymns and songs for the children,[73] the moderation in drinking wine.[74] Besides, Eusebius expresses Christian ideas in philosophical terms: he speaks of "the ethical doctrines" of the Hebrews,[75] the "study of logic" (τῆς λογικῆς πραγματείας) among the Hebrews,[76] or Christ as "the second cause."[77] On the other hand, in a way similar to Clement of Alexandria, Eusebius says that Plato "has adapted in a more greek way" (μετέβαλεν ἐπὶ τὸ Ἑλληνικώτερον) the oracles of the Proverbs.[78] In another passage, he writes that Plato (*Tim*. 27d–28a, already quoted before by Athenagoras) has "explained more widely" (πλατύτερον διασαφῶν) what Moses says in Exod 3:14. Both texts would contain the *same* doctrine of God as the true being, and Plato's text would be an explanation of the biblical text (explanation in its etymological meaning: both *clarification* and *development*).

In other words, we find in Eusebius the same kind of mutual integration of Platonic philosophy within Christianity, and Christianity within Platonic philosophy that we found in Clement: Christian doctrines are rephrased in Platonic terms, while Plato's philosophy is presented as a "more Greek" equivalent of Scripture. Many Platonic passages quoted by Eusebius were already quoted by his Christian predecessors, especially Clement and Origen. But he also added many more texts. Even if he used Origen's *Stromateis*, which cannot be verified or falsified with certainty, it is obvious that he expanded the range of the comparison, since he quoted, for instance, Platonists like Plotinus or Porphyry whose works Origen could not have known. It is very probable that, even if he did use Origen's *Stromateis*, he also added other Platonic texts to his source, unless he engaged in a new and thorough reading of Plato, which cannot be excluded. In any case, Eusebius' comparison between Plato and Scripture can be considered as the culmination point of a specific Christian reading of Plato, which started with Justin. Its extent and its completeness probably account for the fact that, in Antiquity, no one after Eusebius appears to have engaged a second time in the same type of systematic endeavour.

Explanations given to account for this agreement

The fact that Plato, in the Christians' view, may sometimes say *the same things* as the Christians raises a problem: how can one account for this coincidence? The problem is already dealt with by Justin. In his *Apology*, he puts forward two solutions to explain why the Greeks sometimes agree with the Christians. The first explanation consists in supposing that they may have known the Scriptures: "And whatever both philosophers and poets have said concerning the immortality of the soul, or punishments after death, or contemplation of things of the like kind, they have received such suggestions from the prophets as have enabled them to understand and interpret these things."[79] Justin is not specific about the philosophers

and the poets who may have borrowed from Scripture, but the allusion to the immortality of the soul and the punishments after death certainly implies that Plato is among them. In another passage, Justin says that Plato has misunderstood the book of Exodus when he spoke about letter X in the *Timaeus*.[80] The second explanation given by Justin to account for the agreement of the Greeks and the Christians is his idea that both have sometimes known the same Logos. "Those who lived reasonably (μετὰ λόγου)," he says, "are Christians, even though they have been thought atheists."[81] In other passages, he alludes to the "spermatikoi logoi" disseminated in all men, which may explain why every man has the faculty of knowing the truth.[82] Plato is never explicitly mentioned in these passages, but there is no reason to think that his case was an exception to this general principle.

From these two explanations, Athenagoras mentions only the second one. He does not speak of a participation in the Logos, but of the *sympatheia* with God's *pneuma*,[83] two words which give his thought on the matter a more Stoic turn.

Clement, however, knows the two explanations already given by Justin. Concerning the universal participation in the Logos, he says for instance that the doctrine of a single creator is a natural concept, φυσικὴ ἔννοια.[84] Commenting on the fact that Plato was so close to the truth (*Tim*. 28c), he writes that all men have received some part of "the divine spring."[85] That is why, he says, "they admit that God is one, imperishable and uncreated," always living in heaven. But the most frequent explanation given by Clement to account for Plato's agreement with the Christians is the hypothesis that he knew the Jewish Scriptures. The passage from *Gorg*. 477a (about the punishments) would thus be inspired by Exod 20:20.[86] The image of the horse leading the soul to seek physical pleasures (*Phaedr*. 254ce) would be derived from Jer 5:8 ("They became lusty stallions").[87] *Theaet*. 176b (the likeness to God) would be a rewriting of Deut 13:4 ("Walk after the Lord your God").[88] Plato himself would have acknowledged his debt to the Barbarians (*Phaedo* 78a), Clement reasons.[89] And in the allusion to the "ancient saying" in *Laws* IV, 761a, Clement sees a confession that he knew the teaching of the Jewish Law.[90] Sometimes, Clement seems to be sure that Plato has read (ἀναγνούς) the Jewish Scriptures.[91] In other passages, he writes more cautiously that Plato "was not ignorant" of the story of King David who, at the banquet organised during the return of the Ark, behaved with sobriety (2 Kgdms 6:17–19).[92] In one passage, he clearly admits that he does not know how Plato managed to get knowledge of Scripture.[93] Elsewhere, he assumes that Plato happens to say the same thing as Scripture either by chance, or because he may have been instructed by certain wise men.[94] This hypothesis about Plato's "wise instructors" led a few Christians to assume, following Clement, that this instruction took place during his stay in Egypt, which was part of Plato's "official" biography.[95] It is interesting to see how the Christians used this detail to account for his supposed knowledge of the Jewish Scriptures.[96]

Compared to Justin, Clement also gives a third explanation to account for the agreement of the philosophers with the Christians. We already saw how he tended to present philosophy as a revelation. To the passages already mentioned, we could add *Str*. 1.42.1, where, commenting on *Crito* 46b, and stressing the agreement

with Gal 5:26, Clement writes that Plato was "as if divinely inspired" (οἷον θεοφορούμενον). The word "as if" shows that Clement remains cautious, but other texts attest that he tended to *really* consider the philosophers as directly inspired by God. In *Str*. 5.5, for instance, he writes:

> And, in fine, Pythagoras and his followers, with Plato also, and most of the other philosophers, were best acquainted with the Lawgiver, as may be concluded from their doctrine. And by a happy utterance of divination, not without divine help, concurring in certain prophetic declarations, and, seizing the truth in portions and aspects, in terms not obscure, and not going beyond the explanation of the things, they honoured it on as certaining the appearance of relation with the truth. Whence the Hellenic philosophy is like the torch of wick which men kindle, artificially stealing the light from the sun. But on the proclamation of the Word all that holy light shone forth. Then in houses by night the stolen light is useful; but by day the fire blazes, and all the night is illuminated by such a sun of intellectual light.[97]

This text shows that this type of explanation does not exclude the second one: the philosophers have borrowed from Scripture, but were *also* helped by a divine inspiration to express their truths.

Origen alludes several times to the fact that all men participate in reason.[98] He nowhere seems to use this principle to explicitly account for the agreement of philosophers and Christians, but I would tend to think that this is often an implicit idea, underlying, for instance, his thoughts on the diversity and unity of the opinions in his treatise *On principles*.[99] On the other hand, he sometimes writes that the philosophers may have borrowed from Scripture. What Plato writes about the precious stones, for instance (*Phaedo* 109b) would be inspired, according to him, by Isa 54:12 and 54:11, and what he writes about the superior earth by Hag 2:6.[100] But in his extant works, Origen seems to have been cautious about this type of explanation. In *Contra Celsum*, he writes for instance: "I do not, indeed, deny that Plato learnt from certain Hebrews the words quoted from the *Phaedrus*, or even, as some have recorded, that he quoted them from a perusal of our prophetic writings."[101] In other words, Origen was not sure whether Plato knew the biblical doctrines from some Hebrews or from a personal reading of the text. In *Contra Celsum*, he takes up Clement's hypothesis that Plato may have known these doctrines either by chance or through some wise men.[102] Sometimes, Origen seems to attribute Greek knowledge to a divine inspiration, commenting on Rom 1:19 ("because God has made it plain to them") and Sir 1:1 ("All wisdom is from the Lord").[103] But he never presents this inspiration as something supernatural. On the contrary, a passage from the *Homily on Numbers* clearly shows that wisdom *as such* – that of the craftsman, he says, geometry, music or medicine – comes from God.[104]

From these three types of explanation (the rational one, the philological one, the theological one), Eusebius, in his prologue to his comparison between Plato and Scripture, keeps only the second one, which he presents in a rather negative

manner: "It was not improbable that they were also not unacquainted with the Hebrew Oracles, but had in part seized upon them also (. . .); they did not keep their hands clean from theft even of the literary efforts of their own countrymen."[105] The negative way in which Eusebius here introduces the agreement of the philosophers with the Christians probably accounts for the absence, in the *PE*, of the "rational" and the "theological" explanations. Even though he insists on the agreement of Plato and Scriptures on many topics, the bishop of Caesarea seeks to make it clear, right from the start, that this agreement is the result of a theft, *and nothing else*. In a commentary on *Laws* 906a, Eusebius raises the problem of Plato's source ("Whence these ideas came to Plato, I cannot explain"), but once again, his only answer is that Plato must have borrowed from Scripture ("but what I can truly say is that thousands of years before Plato was born this doctrine also had been acknowledged by the Hebrews," "also the oracle of Moses (. . .) seems to be directly *paraphrased* by Plato"). Like Clement, Eusebius thinks that Plato, in the *Laws* 715e–716b, admits that he took his words from the Hebrews.[106] There is a striking discrepancy between the *extent* of the agreement of Plato and Scripture according to Eusebius, and the narrow view the bishop of Caesarea seems to have had about the *causes* of this agreement, compared to his predecessors.

Plato's "mistakes"

The idea of an agreement between Plato and the Christians was challenged in Antiquity by other writers: Pagans such as Celsus, and probably Porphyry in his treatise against the Christians; but also a few Christian writers such as Tatian or Theophilus, as we saw at the beginning of this chapter. The claims of Clement, Origen, and Eusebius on the concord between Plato and the Bible must probably be seen not only as a pure apologetic device, aiming at proving the truth of Christian doctrines, but also as a response to such external or internal refusals to acknowledge Plato's "concord" with the Christians.

However, even these writers admit that Plato was not always right. Already Justin states that even though the philosophers knew the Logos, they only knew it in part, thanks to their rational inquiries.[107] Athenagoras, likewise, ascribes the mistakes of the philosophers to the fact that they did not benefit from a direct and constant contact with God.[108] The same explanation seems to be at the background of a passage in which Clement describes the failures of the Greeks.[109] An analogous idea recurs in the *Contra Celsum*: "But it is a difficult matter, even after much careful consideration, to perceive the difference between those who have received knowledge of the truth and a notion of God at different intervals and for short periods of time, and those who are more fully inspired by God, who have constant communion with Him, and are always led by His Spirit."[110] Eusebius makes a similar comment on the conjectures and hypotheses of the philosophers, which add, he writes, "the mixture of lie" to "the truth of nature."[111]

Another way of explaining the mistakes of the philosophers, and Plato in particular, consists in assuming that they were not always able to understand their putative source, the Bible. For example, Justin explains that if Plato spoke about

the letter khi in the *Timaeus*, it is because he did not understand that the book of Exodus was speaking about the Cross.[112] Clement also admits that the philosophers did not always understand what they stole.[113] He sometimes alludes to misunderstandings made by the Stoics,[114] Epicurus[115] or Aristotle,[116] but, maybe significantly, never Plato. Origen, however, in his *Contra Celsum*, widely develops the idea that Plato borrowed from the Bible and sometimes misunderstood his source. About *Phaedo* 109b, for instance, he writes:

> For our part, our purpose has been simply to say that what we affirm of that sacred land has not been taken from Plato or any of the Greeks, but that they rather – living as they did not only after Moses, who was the oldest, but even after most of the prophets – borrowed from them, and in so doing either misunderstood their obscure intimations on such subjects, or else endeavoured, in their allusions to the better land, to imitate those portions of Scripture which had fallen into their hands.[117]

Origen's claim that *Plato* misunderstood Scripture is a response to Celsus' attack that *the Christians* misunderstood Plato.[118] The theme of the pagan παρακοή (misunderstanding) was probably specific to the *Contra Celsum*, and was absent from the *Stromateis*.[119]

Despite the deep agreement that he acknowledges between Plato and the Christians, Eusebius devotes the final section of *PE* 13 (14–21) to showing that Plato *also* disagrees with Moses, in order to explain why the Christians preferred to follow Moses instead of Plato. He criticises Plato's doctrine of the soul, which distinguishes a passible and an impassible element (17), his conception of heaven and the stars (18), his rules about the community of women in the state (19) and his taste for paederasty (20). Eusebius, unlike Origen, never speaks of a misunderstanding, but rather assumes that Plato used *faulty reasoning*, which he at one point describes as a *lapse* (ὀλίσθημα).[120] In other words, Plato did not mistake the biblical text itself, but developed faulty theories *beside* the text. Both Origen and Eusebius, however, admit that a few of Plato's mistakes may be a concession to his fellow citizens. Then, the fact that he sometimes speaks of several gods does not contradict, in their view, his fundamental monotheistic doctrine. By speaking of many gods, he would have sought to please the crowd, in order to avoid being condemned like Socrates.[121]

Conclusion

The agreement of Plato with Christian doctrines is a major topic in early Christian thought. The extent of the doctrines supposedly shared on both sides increased in the course of time and culminated in Eusebius' composition of a real "handbook" of Christianised Platonism – or Platonised Christianity. What seems particularly interesting is the way in which the early Christian writers tried to account at the same time for Plato's agreement *and* disagreement with Christian doctrines. To explain his agreement, they had three solutions at their disposal – he knew the

Logos, he read the Bible, or he was inspired by God. To account for his disagreement, they could argue that he failed to have complete access to truth, that he misunderstood what he read, or that he deliberately chose to lie in order to deceive the Athenians.

Notes

1 On this general topic, among many publications devoted to the influence of Platonism on patristic thought, see Wolfson 1956; Crouzel 1962; Madec 1974; 1996; Pépin 1999, 1972[1]; Moreschini 2004; Karamanolis 2013 and 2014.
2 This chapter is derived from a Habilitation Thesis (*Συμφωνία. Concorde et vérité des textes dans la littérature grecque jusqu'à Origène*, Paris, 2016) and two previous books: Morlet 2014 and 2016. Unless stated otherwise, the translations are the author's.
3 See Hélène Grelier Deneux's remarks in Pouderon *et al*. 2016: 1305.
4 Tatian, *Oratio ad Graecos* 2–3.
5 Theophilus, *Aut*. 2.4.
6 Theophilus, *Aut*. 3.7.
7 Tertullian, *De anima* 54.2.
8 The name often given to the author of the *Refutation of all heresies* (1.19; in 6.3, Plato is mentioned, with Pythagoras, as the supposed source of the gnostic Valentinus). The work (10.32.4), refers to a treatise previously written by its author "On the substance of the universe" (Περὶ τῆς τοῦ παντὸς οὐσίας), which is probably identical to the work Πρὸς Ἕλληνας καὶ πρὸς Πλάτωνα ἢ καὶ περὶ τοῦ παντός mentioned under the so-called "statue of Hippolytus" (see Prinzivalli 1990) and which Photius may describe (as a work of "Josephus") in his *Bibliotheca*, cod. 48 (Plato contradicts himself, and the views of Alcinoos concerning the soul, matter and resurrection, are wrong).
9 Justin, *Dial*. 2.3–6.
10 Justin, *Dial*. 2.6. Trans. ANF 1.
11 Constantine, *Oratio ad sanctorum coetus* 9.3.
12 Eusebius, *PE* 11.1.3–5.
13 Augustine, *Civ. Dei* 8.5.
14 Justin, trans. ANF 1.
15 Justin, *Ap*. 1.8.4.
16 Justin, *Ap*. 1.18.5.
17 Justin, *Ap*. 1.60.1.
18 "Related to the King of All are all things, and for his sake they are, and of all things fair He is the cause. And related to the Second are the second things and related to the Third the third." Trans. R. G. Bury.
19 Justin, *Ap*. 1.13.3; 60.7.
20 Justin, *Ap*. 2.10.5–6.
21 Athenagoras, *Leg*. 6.1–4.
22 Athenagoras, *Leg*. 12.2.
23 Athenagoras, *Leg*. 16.4.
24 Athenagoras, *Leg*. 19.2.
25 Athenagoras, *Leg*. 23.5–7.
26 Athenagoras, *Leg*. 36.3.
27 Athenagoras, trans. ANF 2.
28 It is sometimes thought that Athenagoras was a real "philosopher," in the pagan sense. Bernard Pouderon believed that he was at the head of a Platonic school in Athens, before moving to Alexandria (Pouderon 1992: 17–22). This assumption is based

primarily on Philip of Sidè (*Historia Christiana*, l. 1–9 Hansen), which is obviously not reliable, and is, in itself, highly disputable, Athenagoras showing only a superficial knowledge of Platonism. In the manuscripts, Athenagoras is called "philosopher" and "Athenian." It is difficult to evaluate the reliability of such designations, and to understand if "philosopher" means that he practiced greek philosophy or just that he was a Christian theologian. Even understood in the pagan sense, it may have come to the mind of the copists because of the numerous philosophical quotations contained in the *Legatio*. Philip's "novel" about Athenagoras is probably an extrapolation based on the two designations of the Christian in the manuscripts – "philosopher" and "Athenian." It transmits no historical data.

29 Clement, *Pr*. 70.1; *Str*. 1.66.3.
30 Clement, *Str*. 5.92.1–4.
31 Clement, *Str*. 5.92.5–6.
32 Clement, *Str*. 5.103.1.
33 Clement, *Str*. 5.103.2–4.
34 Clement, *Paed*. 2.18.1
35 Clement, *Paed*. 2.22.1.
36 Clement, *Str*. 1.9.4.
37 Clement, *Str*. 5.93.2–3.
38 Clement, *Str*. 1.165.2.
39 Clement, *Str*. 2.100.4.
40 Translations of Clement are taken from ANF 2.
41 Clement, *Str*. 5.106.2.
42 Clement, *Str*. 5.108, 2–3.
43 Clement, *Str*. 6.42.3.
44 Clement, *Str*. 1.5.28; 6.67.1.
45 In my view, it is necessary to distinguish between Origen the Christian and Origen the Platonist, though a few scholars have sometimes been tempted to identify them. The chronology of the Christian's life does not fit with the few things we know about Origen the Platonist: at the time when Plotinus, the fellow-disciple of Origen the pagan, opened a school in Rome (246), the Christian was already a famous figure in the Church and died about eight years later (see Dorival 2005).
46 See Eusebius, *Historia ecclesiastica* 6.24.3.
47 See Geerard, n° 1483. Nautin gave a list of fragments available in 1977 (Nautin 1977: 295). More recently, see Moreschini 1987.
48 Jerome, *Letter* 70.4: "Origenes decem scripsit Stromateas, Christianorum et philosophorum sententias conparans, et omnia nostrae religionis dogmata de Platone et Aristotele, Numenio, Cornutoque confirmans." In another text, Jerome alludes to the use of the Stoics in the work (*Dialogue against the Pelagians* Prologue. 1).
49 See Nautin 1972.
50 See Jerome, *Apologia contra Rufinum* 1.18.
51 Saffrey 1975.
52 Morlet 2004.
53 Eusebius, *PE* 12.31.
54 Morlet 2013.
55 Eusebius, *PE* 11.5–6.
56 Eusebius, *PE* 11.7–38.
57 Eusebius, *PE* 12.1–13.11.
58 See Whittaker and Louis 1990 (dialectical part: 4–6; theoretical part: 7–26; ethical part: 27–34).
59 See Goulet-Cazé 1999 (physics: 67–77; ethics: 78–106; the last part of Diogenes's exposition is devoted to the divisions of reality: 106–109).
60 Eusebius, *PE* 11.10.14.
61 Eusebius, *PE* 11.10.15.

62 Eusebius, *PE* 11.13.
63 Eusebius, *PE* 11.14.
64 Eusebius, *PE* 11.26.
65 Eusebius, *PE* 11.32.
66 Eusebius, *PE* 11.33.
67 Eusebius, *PE* 12.18.
68 Eusebius, *PE* 12.35.
69 Eusebius, *PE* 12.40–41.
70 Eusebius, *PE* 13.1.
71 Eusebius, *PE* 11.24.
72 Eusebius, *PE* 12.8.
73 Eusebius, *PE* 12.20.
74 Eusebius, *PE* 12.25.
75 Eusebius, *PE* 11.4.
76 Eusebius, *PE* 11.5.
77 Eusebius, *PE* 11.14.
78 Eusebius, *PE* 12.34.
79 Justin, *Ap*. 1.44.9.
80 Justin, *Ap*. 1.60.1–7.
81 Justin, *Ap*. 1.46.
82 Justin, *Ap*. 2.7.1–2; 10.8; 13.3–5.
83 Athenagoras, *Leg*. 7.2.
84 Clement, *Str*. 1.94.2.
85 Clement, *Pr*. 68.3–4.
86 Clement, *Paed*. 1.67.1–2.
87 Clement, *Paed*. 2.10.89.
88 Clement, *Paed*. 2.100.3–4.
89 Clement, *Pr*. 70.1; *Str*. 1.66.3.
90 Clement, *Str*. 2.133.2.
91 Clement, *Paed*. 2.10.89.
92 Clement, *Str*. 2.18.2. Compare to Augustine, *Civ. Dei* 8.11: "Plato was not ignorant of those writings."
93 Clement, *Str*. 5.102.3.
94 See Origen, *C. Cels*. 4.39, the *Refutation of all the heresies* sometimes ascribed to Hippolytus, 6.21.1–3, Ps.-Justin, *Cohortatio ad Graecos* 20.1; Augustine, *Civ. Dei* 8.11; Theodoretus of Cyrrhus, *Therapeutics of Hellenic maladies* 2.26.
95 See Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* 3.6.
96 In *Civ. Dei* 8.11, Augustine assumes that Plato happened to know the Scriptures through an interpreter, since the Greek translation had not yet occurred. Origen (*C. Cels*. 4.39) already alluded to the same kind of explanation ("it is not very clear, indeed, whether Plato fell in with these stories by chance, or whether, as some think, meeting during his visit to Egypt with certain individuals who philosophised on the Jewish mysteries").
97 Clement, *Str*. 5.29.3–6.
98 Origen, *Princ*. 1.3.6; *C. Cels*. 4.85.
99 See Origen, *Princ*. 2.1.2; 2.9.6.
100 Origen, *C. Cels*. 7.30.
101 Origen, *C. Cels*. 6.19. Translations of *Contra Celsum* are taken from ANF 4.
102 Origen, *C. Cels*. 4.39.
103 Origen, *C. Cels*. 3.47; 4.30; *Commentary to Romans* 1.19.
104 Origen, *Homilies on Numbers* 18.3.
105 Eusebius, *PE* 11. Pr.1. Trans. E.H. Gifford.
106 Eusebius, *PE* 11.13.5.
107 Justin, *Ap*. 2.10.7.

108 Athenagoras, *Leg*. 7.2.
109 Clement, *Pr*. 74.7. See also *Str*. 6.7.55.4, which contains also the second explanation (they mistook their source: see below).
110 Origen, *C. Cels*. 7.51.
111 Eusebius, *PE* 13.14.2.
112 Justin, *Ap*. 1.60.1–7.
113 Clement, *Str*. 6.7.55.4.
114 Clement, *Str*. 5.89.4.
115 Clement, *Str*. 5.90.2.
116 Clement, *Str*. 5.90.3.
117 Origen, *C. Cels*. 7.30.
118 See Origen, *C. Cels*. 6.7; 15; 19; 32.
119 See Morlet, forthcoming.
120 Eusebius, *PE* 13.16.18.
121 See Origen, *C. Cels*. 4.39; Eusebius, *PE* 13.14.

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2 Augustine and the "prophecy" of Plato, *Tim*. 29c3

Christina Hoenig

Inquiries into Augustine's Platonism often focus on his engagement with Neoplatonic doctrine. In this context, discussions have regularly centred on Augustine's conversion in his early adult life,[1] related questions concerning the specific Platonism to which he was exposed at the time (Plotinian or Porphyrian?),[2] or the manner in which Neoplatonic thought continued to shape his doctrinal perspectives and, by consequence, those of Western Christianity during the early centuries CE and beyond.[3] What is frequently neglected, however, is Augustine's engagement with Plato himself vis-à-vis the Middle and Neoplatonists and vis-à-vis his contemporary intellectual competitors, both Christian and non-Christian. As regards Augustine's view on the Platonic tradition, I have argued previously that the manner in which he integrates views he considers to be Plato's own in his discussions of Middle and Neoplatonic doctrine at times reveals an interesting dynamic. Despite his verdict at *De civitate dei* 8.5 that "no other philosophers have come closer to us than the Platonists," Augustine condemns their arrogance and contrasts Plato's views with those of Middle or Neoplatonists who had distorted his wisdom. Thus in Book Ten of *Civ*. *Dei* we find him calling upon Plato's "doctrine" of a created soul while refuting the Neoplatonic view of an uncreated universe. In his invective against Apuleius' Middle Platonic demonology in Books Eight and Nine of the same work, he argues that Plato had banned demons from his ideal city.[4]

Early Christian authors before Augustin had already acknowledged clear parallels between Plato's philosophical ideas and their own doctrine. Justin Martyr (c.100–165) observes, with a clear reference to the *Timaeus* that "in saying that all things have been ordered and created by God, we will appear to state a doctrine of Plato."[5] The *Timaeus*, specifically, would rise to obtain a central position in the intellectual encounters between Christian and non-Christian thinkers, its creation story being claimed by both sides for the purpose of reaffirming their doctrinal identity.[6]

Augustine himself accessed Plato's *Timaeus* via Cicero's partial Latin translation of the dialogue. In the context of my previous study, I discussed his quotation of *Tim*. 29c3: "For as being stands in relation to coming to be, in this manner truth stands in relation to convincingness (ὅτιπερ πρὸς γένεσιν οὐσία τοῦτο πρὸς πίστιν ἀλήθεια)." This statement features in Augustine's *De consensu evangelistarum*

1.35.53 (c.403–404) and twice in his *De trinitate* 4.18.24 (c.413–414).[7] For the purpose of the present study, I propose to return to these passages to examine Augustine's appropriation of *Tim*. 29c3 in the context of the broader polemical agendas he pursues in these works. In the context of the former work, I will illustrate how Augustine's argumentative strategy, in which his quotation of the Timaean passage at *Cons. ev*. 1.35.53 plays a central role, culminates in an attack against Porphyry's denial of Christ's divinity advanced in the *Philosophy from Oracles*, and conclude that Porphyry, rather than Augustine's Manichaean contemporaries, is Augustine's primary target. In the case of *Trin*. 4.18.24, on the other hand, I show that Augustine's quotation of *Tim*. 29c3 appears in the context of a broader polemical programme designed to put his Homoian contemporaries, who argued in favour of Christ's inferiority in relation to the father, on a par with Neoplatonists who refused to acknowledge Christ's divinity, thus positioning both in opposition to Christian orthodoxy. In both cases, Augustine recruits Plato as a prophet who, at *Tim*. 29c3, predicted the Christian truth. Overall, my analysis shows that Augustine carefully adjusts his use of Plato's words to the type of criticism he is targeting, an insight that will allow us to form an altogether more nuanced picture of his Platonism.

Augustine's Latin source

In Plato's *Timaeus* Socrates' eponymous interlocutor delivers an account of the creation of the universe in accordance with Plato's familiar metaphysical structure. A realm of being, τὸ ὄν ("that which is") associated with intelligible forms is distinguished from a realm of coming to be, τὸ γιγνόμενον, associated with objects of sense perception. The orderly cosmos, an object of sense perception, is formed by a divine architect, the demiurge, in the likeness of an intelligible paradigm. A passage that adds to this dualistic metaphysical framework corresponding epistemological planes is *Tim*. 29b4–c3. There, Timaeus explains that the specific truth status of a given account is determined by the ontological class of the account's subject matter:

> We must distinguish that the accounts given will themselves be akin to the diverse objects which they serve to explain. Those that deal with what is abiding and firm and discernible by the aid of thought will be abiding and unshakable; and in so far as it is possible and fitting for statements to be irrefutable and invincible, they must in no wise fall short thereof; whereas the accounts of that which is copied after the likeness of that model, and is itself a likeness, will be analogous thereto and possess likelihood; for as being (οὐσία) stands in relation to becoming (γένεσιν), in this manner truth (ἀλήθεια) stands in relation to convincingness (πίστιν).[8]

In the context of Plato's dialogue, the passage signals to Socrates' interlocutors that Timaeus' creation account possesses convincingness (πίστις), as determined by the ontological status of its subject matter, the universe, an object of coming to be.

Augustine's version of the above passage *Tim*. 29c3, which appears at *Cons. ev*. 1.35.53 and *Trin*. 4.18.24, as noted above, is quoted almost exactly[9] according to Cicero's partial Latin translation of the *Timaeus*,[10] which runs as follows:[11] "For to the same degree as eternity impacts upon what has come to be, truth impacts upon faith (*quantum enim ad id quod ortum est aeternitas valet, tantum ad fidem veritas*)."[12]

The *De consensu evangelistarum*: oracles and prophets

In his *Retractationes*, a corrective survey of his literary output, Augustine notes that the "first volume [of the *Cons. ev*.] was written against those who either honour, or pretend to honour, Christ as a man of supreme wisdom, [but] are unwilling to believe in the gospels, precisely because they were not written by himself but by his disciples, whom they believe to have attributed to him his divinity (. . .) by mistake."[13] As we turn to *Cons. ev*. 1, however, we find that the specific charges levelled against Christ are more varied. In what follows, I will briefly set out several different argumentative lines advanced by Augustine in this book in order to indicate the breadth of criticism addressed and the variety of critics under target. Nevertheless, focusing thereafter on Augustine's lead-up to the concluding chapter of *Cons. ev*. 1, I argue that this polemical finale serves to oppose views associated with Porphyry, specifically, who, having already featured as a recurring target of Augustine's polemic throughout the entire book,[14] is shown by Augustine to be in disagreement with his own master.

At *Cons. ev*. 1.7.10 Augustine explains that the critics under focus "are wont to adduce this as the hallmark of their vanities: that the evangelists themselves are not in agreement." The accusation of disharmony among the evangelists was a point of contention already for the second-century Platonist Celsus, judging, for instance, from Origen's defence at *Contra Celsum* 5.56 of their reports concerning the number of angels who had visited Jesus' tomb.[15] Similarly pitched charges against contradictory details in the evangelists' reports were also advanced by Porphyry who, alongside Celsus, is described by the late fourth-century bishop Epiphanius of Salamis as having exploited several other of the evangelists' incongruences in his *Contra Christianos*.[16]

A further accusation flagged by Augustine, for instance, at *Cons. ev*. 1.7.11 is the charge singled out in his later *Retractationes*, as mentioned above.[17] The fact that Jesus did not leave any written records prompted the unwelcome accusation that the evangelists "claimed more for their master than he really was; so much more indeed that they even called him the son of god." The problematic lack of writings left by Jesus himself is addressed also in Augustine's retort to his Manichaean antagonist Faustus,[18] which points to the followers of Mani as further possible targets of the *Cons. ev*. What is more, accusations against Jesus of engaging with magic, countered by Augustine at *Cons. ev*. 1.9.14, show a further thematic link between this work and Augustine's *C. Faust*., where, at 12.45, he acknowledges that the miracles brought about by Jesus and reported by the evangelists might have been attributed to magic had they not been predicted, and

thus validated, by the Hebrew prophets. The portrayal of Jesus as a sage man or a magician, associated by the early Christian apologists[19] with Jewish writers, was a charge to which Origen had already responded at great length (*C. Cels*. 1.68, and see *ibid*. 1.28). Views of Christ as a thaumaturge appear to have featured, moreover, in a broader attack advanced by Porphyry,[20] and were likely also current among Augustine's non-Christian contemporaries.[21] While Augustine's engagement with such criticisms in the early build-up of Book One of the *Cons. ev*. points to a variety of adversaries, we will find that he soon intensifies his focus on the Neoplatonist Porphyry, in particular, as his primary adversary.

In Chapter 15 Augustine addresses the view that Christ was a man of extraordinary piety, but, as with the previous portrayals of him as a sage, magician or thaumaturge, did not hold divine status. It is in this context that Augustine first comments on the respective value of oracles and prophecies, a topic to which he will return as he prepares for his anti-Porphyrian finale. At *Cons. ev*. 1.15.23, Porphyry and his associates are under criticism: "some of their philosophers, as Porphyry the Sicilian advances in his books (*libris suis*), consulted their gods for a response on the subject of Christ. But they were compelled by their own oracles to praise Christ." Augustine is likely responding to Porphyry's *Philosophy from Oracles*, where the Neoplatonist records the oracle of the goddess Hecate, who pronounced Jesus a man of praise due to his piety[22] but denied him divine status. Augustine returns to denouncing pagan oracles at *Cons. ev*. 1.20.28, where he places them in an unfavourable light compared to the pronouncements of the Hebrew prophets.[23] He demands that "some Sibyl" or "whosoever among their other prophets" come forward and reveal the truth of the Christian doctrine, noting at this point that he "will not mention that what can be read in their books attests to our, the Christian religion. They could have overheard this from the holy angels or directly from our prophets."

The point Augustine wishes to establish is that the prophets' testimony, in contrast to the utterances of pagan oracles, has been revealed as true by the example of Christ, by the establishment of the Christian religion, and by the destruction of idols. The veracity of their prophecies, in turn, attests to the veracity also of the gospels, which describe the same events. Augustine duly discusses the pronouncements of the prophets from chapter 26 onwards. Cleverly, however, he subsequently recruits non-Christians as additional "prophets" who announced the rule of the Christian god and the coming of Christ. Initially, at 1.30.46, Augustine notes that the poet Lucan, "a great declaimer of verse," had attempted to discover the identity of the Hebrew god but failed to "conduct his inquiry piously" and was unable to produce more than the hesitant statement "Judæa, devoted to the worship of an uncertain God."[24] Despite his failure Lucan thus, nevertheless, confirmed the rule of god "of whose existence he perceived considerable proof."

As Augustine had already indicated, not only are the Platonists unable to produce evidence against the fulfilment of the prophecies – their own books proclaim it! It is at this point, in the concluding section of *Cons. ev*. 1, that we encounter our Platonic passage, which is put to an astonishing use. Plato's *Tim*. 29c3 is turned by Augustine into a prophecy of its own accord; into a prophecy, moreover, that was

received by Plato, who finds himself predicting Christ the mediator, and thereby attesting to the veracity of the reports given by the evangelists.

Leading up to the Platonic quote, Augustine initially formulates the Christian faith in detail, laying out the roles of Christ as wisdom in its creative aspect, of humans and angels who participate in this wisdom, and of the holy spirit who pours love into our hearts, rounding it off with a reference to the "trinity that is the one god." Following this manifesto of his Christian creed, Augustine turns his focus on Christ's mediating role between temporal and eternal realms. Rational human minds are able to participate in Christ and thereby achieve salvation, his resurrection serving as a paradigm for their return to heaven:

> For unless something came to be also in the nature of a rational soul, in accordance with a temporal existence, (. . .) soul would never attain, from a life of utmost calamity and ignorance, to a life of wisdom and excellence. For this reason, since the truth (*veritas*) of those who behold it rejoices in things eternal (*rebus aeternis*), while the faith (*fides*) of believers is owed to things created (*rebus ortis*), man is purified through the faith in temporal things, that he may perceive the truth of things eternal.

The descent of the eternal towards the temporal, Christ's becoming human, is the key aspect of his mediating role between the ontological pairings of faith in things created, temporal and below, and the truth of things eternal and above. Upon their purification from the temporal, through faith in the example of Christ, humans may perceive the eternal truth. Having reiterated these central aspects of Christian doctrine, Augustine quotes the Timaean passage:

> For likewise a certain man, the philosopher Plato, most noble among them, speaks in the book they call the *Timaeus*: "To the same degree as eternity impacts upon things made, in the same manner truth impacts upon faith." Those two things, eternity and truth, are associated with [the heavens] above; these other two things, that which is made and faith, are associated with [the earth] below. Therefore, that we may be called away from the lowest up to the highest, and that what is made may attain to eternity, we must arrive at truth through faith. And since all that strives towards opposite extremes is held [in balance] by some mediating element, as the lack of righteousness of a temporal existence alienated us from eternal righteousness, there was need of some mediating righteousness of a temporal nature. (. . .) For this reason, Christ was named the mediator (. . .) between the immortal god and mortal man, himself being both god and man who reconciled man to god and who, remaining what he was, was made what he was not. He himself for us is the faith in things that are made, and the truth that belongs to things eternal.

We note that our Timaean passage contains several of the key terms that feature in Augustine's preceding manifesto: "eternity" (we recall Cicero's choice of the rendering *aeternitas* for οὐσία, "being"),[25] temporal "things that are made," "faith"

and "truth": "To the same degree as eternity impacts upon things made, in the same manner truth impacts upon faith."

Laying emphasis on Christ's mediating role with the help of a further appropriation of Platonic thought, Augustine resorts to geometry by likening him to the middle term between two extremes and lines up a further signpost of his Christian creed, the justification through faith, the restoring of the rightful relationship between mortals, now cleansed from sin, and god. Christ is the mediating element between humans in the temporal realm, who lack righteousness, and their salvation: "by adjusting itself to the [temporal] without breaking from the [eternal], it would restore what is lowest to what is highest."[26]

It appears that at the time Augustine composed the *Cons. ev*. his view had evolved to deny human nature and free will any role in the process of justification, which was initiated and brought about in its entirety by god.[27] It has thus been suggested, given that the Pelagian controversy had not yet erupted into the major conflict it would become some years later, that Augustine's stress on justification through faith in the present context may be directed against the Manicheans.[28] At *C. Faust*. 22.27, for instance, Augustine describes sin as the disruption of the natural order willed by god, the natural order being the rational action that follows the contemplation of god's image, a contemplation that must be conducted through faith in the human realm. Upon our salvation, righteousness is brought to completion by god's grace (*iustitia perfecta per gratiam*). Upon such a view the *Cons. ev*. might have been composed by Augustine as an attack against the followers of Mani.[29] Augustine's subsequent argumentative strategy, however, and the distinct Platonic colouring of the preceding passages make it clear that it is Porphyry the Neoplatonist, in particular, who is being singled out. Thus, at the outset of the subsequent section 1.35.54 Augustine describes the Christian manifesto as summarised in his (or Cicero's) translation of *Tim*. 29c3 as a "grand and unerring revelation," that had proclaimed "this kingdom and Christ's mediating office[30] to the ancients through prophecy, and that is now preached to their descendants through the gospel (*hoc magnum et inenarrabile sacramentum, hoc regnum et sacerdotium antiquis per prophetiam revelabatur, posteris eorum per evangelium praedicatur*)." Alongside the prophets of the Old Testament, Augustine is concerned to report the views of two non-Christian authors, Lucan and Plato, described by him as noble and venerated men, who confirmed the rule of the Christian god and Christ and the mediator, respectively. While Lucan was unable to grasp the nature of this divinity, Plato, Augustine's favourite recruit against the Platonists, is elevated to the status of a prophet. While some of the arguments advanced in Augustine's discussion in *Cons. ev*. 1 might certainly have been effective also against overlapping Manichaean viewpoints, it appears to me that the prominent theme of prophecy in the book suggests that the Neoplatonists were foremost on Augustine's mind, especially in view of the fact that the "true" prophecy of Plato concerning Christ's mediation aligns with the testimony of the Hebrew prophets, but is in contrast to Porphyry's own oracle, which pronounced him merely a pious man. Augustine thus effectively pulls the rug from underneath the feet of those Platonists who considered the apostles' reports – which are

shown to mirror Plato's own prophecy – to be erroneous. How could their reports be false if Plato himself had predicted them?

Purification, contemplation and consubstantiality

Christ the mediator at Trin. *4.18.24*

According to Augustine's *Retractationes*, we recall, he composed the *Cons. ev.* around the same time he began working on *Trin.* 1.[31] As we will see, Porphyry's arguments were still engaging Augustine when he turned to Book Four of the latter work in c.413–414, but other controversies had come to occupy his mind in addition. The views of Pelagius concerning human nature and free will, whose efforts he considered sufficient for mortals to cleanse themselves from sin – a view that questioned the necessity for divine intervention – begins to engage Augustine from c.414 onwards.[32] Moreover, at around the same time we find Augustine contesting the Homoian view according to which Christ, while "like" (ὅμοιος) the father, is distinct from him, a challenge to the Nicaean creed according to which Christ was "consubstantial" (ὁμοούσιος) with god.[33] Contesting the inferiority of Christ is a topic foremost on Augustine's mind in the early books of *Trin.* In what follows, I will draw attention to several passages from these early books in order to show that Augustine from the beginning develops an argumentative line designed to counter shared Homoian and Platonic assumptions that challenge Christ's full divinity, and that claim for humans the ability to contemplate god's nature of their own accord. At the same time, Christ's mediation, summarised once again with the help of Plato's "prophecy" at *Tim.* 29c3, is portrayed by Augustine as a divine mission that confirms, as opposed to threatens, his consubstantiality with the father.

A recurring theme in the early books of *Trin.* is Augustine's emphasis on the necessity of faith in Christ's incarnation for the process of justification and, on the flip side, his condemnation of the denial of god's mediating role and of his full divinity. This theme is planted already in the preface to *Trin.* 1.1, where Augustine issues a warning against those "who scorn the starting point of faith and allow themselves to be deceived through unseasonable and misguided love of reason."[34] Early in the same book, at *Trin.* 1.1.3, Augustine initiates a related line of argument effective against both the Homoians and the Platonists, given their shared arrogant confidence in their ability to know god's nature. For this argument, Augustine points to the implications of our mortal existence with regard to the knowledge we are able to obtain. For mortals to "see" or contemplate god's substance, "it is necessary for our minds to be purified before that inexpressible reality can be inexpressibly seen." Central to his line of reasoning is the role of faith as the prerequisite for this purification: we are "nurtured on faith as long as we have not yet been endowed with that necessary purification" which will allow us to contemplate god's nature. Against the pretentions of those who believe themselves to be in the know, Augustine argues that "the human mind with its weak eyesight cannot concentrate on so overwhelming a light unless it has been nursed back to full vigor on the 'justice of faith' (Rom 4:13)." The faith of the pious mind

assumes an epistemological role:[35] "the due observance of piety makes the ailing mind well for the perception of unchanging truth and saves it from being plunged into opinions of falsehood by the random whims of temerity."

The subsequent chapters of Book One focus on proving the unity and equality of Christ and the father. Interweaving the notions of Christ's full divinity and the necessity of his mediating effort for human's ability to contemplate the divine, Augustine now associates the mediator more explicitly with the theme of justification through faith: "Fact is that the man Christ Jesus, mediator of god and men (1 Tim 2:5), now reigning for all the just who live by faith (Heb 2:4), is going to bring them to direct insight of god." This insight, the ability to contemplate god, is the "prize" for human faith (1.3.17). Significantly, Augustine's present argument is integrated into his exegesis of 1 Cor 15:24–28, according to which "he will hand over the kingdom to the father and himself be subject to the father," a statement that would appear to support the Homoian assumption of Christ's inferiority. This "handing over," Augustine argues, however, is precisely the process, initiated by our faith in Christ's human form, that enables us to contemplate god in his triune nature from a higher epistemological plane. This process does not diminish Christ's divinity, but reaffirms it. Accordingly, Augustine's focus in Books Two and Three is on the missions that were predicted in the Old Testament theophanies, a topic on which he elaborates in order to refute with renewed force the Homoian charge that the "mission," or the "having been sent" of the son and the holy spirit by the father entails their inferiority with regard to the sender.

The subsequent early chapters of Book Four, in turn, have sometimes been perceived as oddly out of place or "clumsy"[36] in view of the work's overall thematic concern of establishing the unity of the triune god. They focus almost exclusively on Christ's mediating and redemptive action. This topic, however, we saw, has been central to Augustine's discussion from the very beginning: no knowledge or contemplation of god's nature is possible without Christ's mediation, in his human form, on our behalf. His mediation is the "handing over," the elevation of believers to a higher epistemological level from which they may contemplate god. Crucially, however, this process would not be possible if Christ himself were not equal to god. A further possible implication of Augustine's argument is that those who deny Christ's equal divine status are unable to perceive the true nature of god since they have no faith in Christ's mediating role, enacted in his human form. In other words, they fail to meet the initial prerequisite that enables them to contemplate him in his triune nature. Augustine's return to discussing the human ability to know god at the outset of *Trin*. 4 thus falls neatly in line with his preceding narrative. Condemning once more the "puffed-up" arrogance of those who assume that knowledge of the divine nature can be obtained without divine help, Augustine notes that, instead, it is the man who is aware of his own weakness and limitations who will succeed.[37]

What may have contributed to the odd impression left by the early chapters of Book Four is the fact that we find there a noticeable change in Augustine's methodology. At *Trin*. 4.1.4 he interweaves scriptural references with philosophical methodology and discusses the role of Christ in terms of a central Platonic

difficulty, the opposition between the one and the many.[38] Christ the mediator is able to join the many to the one, thereby mirroring the relationship of the harmonious musical ratio 2:1, the octave:

> By nature we are not god, by nature we are men; by sin we are not just. So god became a just man to intercede with god for sinful man. The sinner did not match the just but man did match man. So he applied to us the similarity of his humanity to take away the dissimilarity of our iniquity, and becoming a partaker of our mortality he made us partakers of his divinity. It was surely right that the death of the sinner issuing from the stern necessity of condemnation should be undone by the death of the just man issuing from the voluntary freedom of mercy, his single matching our double.

Augustine subsequently elaborates on the harmonious ratio of 2:1,[39] explaining that it signifies the relationship between our twofold death and resurrection, spiritual and corporeal, in relation to the one death and resurrection of Christ. He stresses that our two resurrections begin with faith by which one "believes in him who justifies the ungodly" (Rom 4:5). The body's resurrection is "deferred to the end, when our justification will be inexpressibly perfected." (4.1.5) The ratio of 2:1 continues to feature in Chapter Two, where Augustine elaborates on the symbolic meaning of various scriptural occurrences of the number six (at which he arrives by adding the single and the double, 1+2=3, and by further adding 1+2+3=6), which is subsequently identified with the temporal realm. Linking this numerical ratio back to the theme of Christ's mediation, he explains at 4.2.11 that it is through him that "the many are able to cling to the one." Christ's mission is thus offered by Augustine as a solution to Plato's old chestnut, the problem of the relation between the one and the many. Christ is shown to be "equal to god by oneness of divinity," while being our companion through his assumption of the body. Augustine reaffirms the same conclusion in clearly anti-Homoian terminology: while Christ and god are one (John 10:30) "in the consubstantial equality of the same substance," it is through his oneness that mortals, many on account of their "clashing wills and desires," are cleansed by the mediator.

In Chapters Three and Four, Augustine shifts the emphasis to the purifying effect of Christ's mediation. He initially contrasts the mediator of life with the mediator of death, the devil, who is associated with "false philosophy" and tricks the curious into believing they may be purified through "sacrilegious sacred rites," in a rather obvious attack against Porphyry and his followers that echoes Augustine's discussion at *Civ. Dei* 4.32.2; 10.9.2; 10.23 and 10.18.[40] Against such false types of purification, Augustine points to the "true" purification, the justification undergone by Christian believers: "by his resurrection he called to new life us who were predestined, justified us who were called, glorified us who were justified" (4.3.17).

Augustine intensifies his attack against the Platonists at 4.4.20 by returning to his earlier point that Christ's mediation is the necessary condition for our contemplation of god. Those who believe they can achieve this without his intervention

are "defiled by pride," spurred on by their ability to conceive of the non-sensible realm, "however small a measure of the light of unchanging truth." While they establish with "most persuasive arguments and convincing proofs that all temporal things happen according to eternal ideas," their knowledge about the non-sensible world is useless for predicting anything to do with *human* existence – which would include, it is implied, Christ in his human form. The philosophers' knowledge of intelligible ideas does not enable them to predict the future mission of the mediator.

It is at this point, in the immediate lead-up to Augustine's quotation of *Tim*. 29c3 at *Trin*. 4.18.24, that Augustine introduces a topic familiar from his use of the passage at *Cons. ev*. 1.35.53, the prediction of future events through prophecy. The future may be announced by prophets, angels or individuals enabled by the holy spirit to see beyond mortal confines. It is possible, moreover, that demonic "aerial powers" overheard these announcements concerning the "city of saints and the true mediator." But the demons delivered these messages to their priests unaware of the fact that god had turned them into instruments of the truth: "god, however, used them without their knowing it to ensure that the truth would be heard on all sides as a help for the faithful and testimony to the godless." The theme of false mediators introduced by Augustine not only serves to contrast those powers with the true mediator Christ. It allows him, moreover, to introduce the non-Christian "prophecy" concerning Christ the mediator, *Tim*. 29c3, while pointing out that Plato's prophecy had issued from god, perhaps even reached him accidentally. He certainly did not infer this knowledge from the intelligible ideas.[41]

In the final section of Chapter Four, Augustine draws together the various threads he had planted as early as the prologue to Book One,[42] and which now culminate in a summarising declaration of Christ's purifying mediation between temporal and eternal, belief and contemplation of the truth, mortal, and divine, a role that did not, Augustine stresses, diminish his divine status in relation to the father:

> We were incapable of grasping eternal things, weighed down (. . .) by our sins we had collected by our love of temporal things (. . .) so we needed purifying. But we could only be purified for adaptation to eternal things by temporal means like those we were already bound to in a servile adaptation (. . .) just as the rational mind is meant, once purified, to contemplate eternal things, so it is meant, while still needing purification, to give faith to temporal things. One of those men who were accounted wise among the Greeks himself said, "To the same degree as eternity impacts upon what has come to be, truth impacts upon faith." And it is indeed a true statement. What we call "temporal" he described as "that which has originated." We too belong to this category, not only our bodies but also our changeable spirits (. . .) when our faith becomes truth by seeing, our mortality will be transformed into a fixed and firm eternity (. . .) the son of god came in order to become son of man and to capture our faith and draw it to himself and by means of it to lead us on to his truth, for he took on our mortality in such a way that he did not lose his own eternity. "For to the same degree as eternity impacts upon what has come

> to be, truth impacts upon faith." So it was proper for us to be purified in such a way that he who remained eternal should become for us "originated" (. . .) [we could not] pass from being among the things that originated to eternal things unless the eternal allied himself to us in our originated condition and so provided us with a bridge to his eternity.

While Augustine's appropriation of *Tim*. 29c3 in the present context shares with the previously examined context of *Cons. ev*. its portrayal of the Timaean passage as a prophecy that predicted Christ's mediation between mortal and divine existence, Augustine here places it into an argumentative line that is built upon his trinitarian epistemology and that is aimed, at the same time, at proving Christ's eternity or full divine status. While the focus on purification as the prerequisite for epistemological advancement in the chapters leading up to his quotation of *Tim*. 29c3 – along with the fact that Plato's words would sting the followers of Porphyry more than any scriptural prophecy – points to Augustine's preoccupation with Neoplatonic charges against Christ's divinity, I suggest that Augustine's primary aim here is not simply to refute the Neoplatonic stance, but instead to exhibit the Homoian line's similarity to it, a rather incriminating charge to advance against Christians. Augustine is able to do so thanks to his carefully developed portrayal of their positions as essentially overlapping. That Augustine's anti-Porphyrian attack may ultimately be aimed at exposing the faults of the Homoians is supported by the fact that, following his exegesis of *Tim*. 29c3 at *Trin*. 4.18.24, he immediately stresses that we are to place the preceding discussion of Christ's mediation into the wider context of his mission or his "having been sent," which, if properly understood, attests to his consubstantiality with the father. Augustine summarises at the outset of the subsequent chapter 4.5.25:

> There you have what the son of god has been sent for; indeed, there you have what it is for the son of god to have been sent. Everything that has taken place in time in "originated" matters, which have been produced from the eternal and reduced back to the eternal, and everything that has been designed to elicit faith by which we must be purified to contemplate the truth, has either been testimony to this mission or has been the actual mission of the son of god.

Conclusion

The present discussion provides a snapshot of Augustine's versatile appropriation of Plato as a prophet of the Christian truth. In his *Cons. ev*., in the context of an all-out attack against a variety of critics, Augustine turns Plato's own words at *Tim*. 29c3 against Porphyry, whom he thereby exposes as hostile towards his own master. In the context of *Trin*. 4.18.24, in turn, the same Timaean passage is woven by Augustine into a rather more intricate polemical program that is intended to denounce the Neoplatonists' pride while, at the same time, reducing the Homoian stance – portrayed as overlapping with the Neoplatonic viewpoints – to that of a hostile, anti-Christian heresy.

Notes

1 A controversy sparked by Alfaric 1918: 380–381, whose view that Augustine converted to Platonism before turning to Christianity is widely rejected today. More recently, Dobell 2009 has argued that Augustine's conversion from Porphyrian Neoplatonism to Christianity continued into the mid-390s.
2 The notorious reference to the "books of the Platonists" occurs at *Conf*. 7.9.13. Among Porphyry's champions are Theiler 1953; Beatrice 1989. O'Connell 1963 and Rist 1996 are in the Plotinian camp. See O'Donnell 1992 vol. 2: 412–443.
3 Crouse 1999 gives a survey of this and other problematic aspects of Augustine's Platonism, along with the most important literary references.
4 See Hoenig 2018: 227–228, 272–273. Rémy 1979: 545–596 uses Augustine's quotations of *Tim*. 29c3 in the *Cons. ev*. and *Trin*. as a springboard for a broader discussion of his soteriology and his views on the relationship between the temporal and eternal realms.
5 Justin, *Ap*. 20.4, 1–2.
6 See Niehoff 2007.
7 I follow the dating of Hombert 2000: 66–80, who places the beginnings of *Trin*. 1 around 400–403, shortly before Augustine composed the *Cons. ev*., dated to 403–404 (81–87). According to Hombert Augustine interrupted working on the *Trin*. and did not compose Book Four until 413–414, *contra* Camelot 1956, who suggests that Book Four was composed around the same time as the *Cons. ev*.
8 Trans. according to Lamb 1925 with modifications.
9 Augustine drops Cicero's connective *enim* at *Cons. ev*. 1.35.53 and in the first of the two quotations at *Trin*. 4.18.24.
10 Augustine at *Civ. Dei* 13.16.1 also quotes Cicero's translation of *Tim*. 41a–b, the demiurge's speech to the subordinate divinities. The same passage features again at *Civ. Dei* 22.26 and other writings. Hagendahl 1967: 131–138 lists all of Augustine's quotations from Cicero's translation.
11 Cicero, *Tim*. 3.8.1–2, ed. Ax and Plasberg 2011.
12 I have argued previously, at Hoenig 2018: 98–101, that Cicero's surprising choice of *aeternitas*, "eternity," for οὐσία, "being," may be explained by the fact that he associated the eternal paradigm (τὸ ἀίδιον παράδειγμα) after which the created world is modelled not with the realm of being, a generic ontological class, but with the Form of Eternity. In other words, Cicero makes our universe a copy, or an image, of the Form of Eternity, even though eternity is only one of the qualities possessed by a generic Platonic form. Cicero's chosen rendering *aeternitas* evidently had an impact on Augustine's understanding of the *Timaeus*. Οὐσία, intelligible being, is associated by him with the eternal life obtained after the human body's resurrection.
13 Augustine, *Retr*. 2.16.
14 Largely in line with J.J. O'Meara 1959, and *contra* Merkel 1996–2010: 1230 (and see *ibid*. 1971: 23–31), who suggests that the work is primarily targeting the Manicheans, a verdict that appears unnecessarily restrictive.
15 For a study of Origen's impact on Augustine, see e.g. Crouse 1992.
16 Epiphanius, *Adversus haereses* 51.8 = fr. 55T Becker 2016. See also Merkel 1971: 13–18. Merkel at 1986–2010: 1230 doubts that Augustine knew Porphyry's *Contra Christianos*. Even if this is the case, the arguments contained in the work could likely have made their way to Augustine by the early fifth century.
17 E.g. *Cons. ev*. 11.17; 9.14.
18 Augustine, *C. Faustum* 32.2; 33.3. Hombert 2000 dates this work to 400–402.
19 Tertullian, *Apologeticum* 21.17; Lactantius, *Divinae institutiones* 4.13.17.
20 See, for instance, Jerome, *Tractatus LIX In psalmos 81*, Z. 206–239 (= 70F Becker 2016), according to whom Porphyry (at Z. 228) suspects the evangelists of magic and thaumaturgy undertaken for financial gains. The Middle Platonist Apuleius and the

Neopythagorean Apollonius of Tyana are listed as further examples of thaumaturgy (Z. 228–229).

21 The most important study on the various views concerning Jesus held by Augustine's non-Christian contemporaries is Madec 1992; see esp. 48–67 for the present context. Dodaro 2004: 95 discusses Augustine's treatment of such views in his *Civ. Dei*.

22 On the details of this oracle see e.g. Courcelle 1954. Becker 2016: 370 notes that Hecate's oracle confirms Jesus' piety (345F, 9.25.25–30, ed. Smith 1993), but that, according to Porphyry's reading, it is Jesus' immortal pious soul only that Christians erroneously worship.

23 Elsewhere, he holds the predictions of the Hebrew prophets up as a defence against the charge of magic or thaumaturgy against Jesus. At *C. Faust*. 12.45, he argues that "the testimony of the prophets (*prophetae*) who lived so long before could not be ascribed to magical arts."

24 Lucan, *De bello civili* 2.592–593.

25 See n. 12.

26 The idea of a required middle term is inspired by *Tim*. 31b4–32c4 where Timaeus makes reference to geometrical proportion in the context of the four material elements that make up the cosmos. Between any two extremes, the most effective bond for achieving true unity is that which is able to assimilate itself to the two extremes it unites (31c2–3), with the help of proportion (ἀναλογία): "Whenever the middle term of three numbers (. . .) between any two of them is such that what the first term is to it, it is to the last, and, conversely, what the last term is to the middle term, it is to the first, then, since the middle term turns out to be both first and last, and the last and the first likewise both turn out to be middle terms, they will all of necessity turn out to have the same relationship to each other, and, given this, will be unified" (*Tim*. 31c4–32a7, trans. Zeyl). See my further analysis of this passage, as appropriated by Augustine, at Hoenig 2018: 260–262.

27 McGrath 1986 vol. 1: 39 dates this development to 396–397, as visible in the two volumes addressed to Simplicianus and Augustine's comments at *De praedestinatione sanctorum* 4.8.

28 See Dodaro 2004: 76; Merkel 1971: 224–227.

29 Courcelle 1954 suggests that the arguments Augustine counters in the *Cons. ev*. reflect a mix of criticisms, often similar in nature, from various corners. Criticisms that originated with Celsus or Porphyry could likely have been appropriated by followers of other anti-Christian convictions.

30 Cf. Vulg. Heb 7:12, 7:24.

31 Hombert 2000: 45–80.

32 See Drecoll 1996–2002: 631. Ayres 2010: 166 notes that "the *De trinitate* may have been rendered increasingly anti-Pelagian during later redaction," a possible reason why the work as we have it frequently stresses the necessity of grace for our contemplation of god. An attempt to link Augustine's stress on the necessity of grace to his altercations with the Pelagians was made by Plagnieux 1954. In the specific context of *Trin*. 4.1.24, Augustine appears to me to be addressing primarily Homoian and Platonic perspectives.

33 See Barnes 1999 for a study of Augustine's anti-Homoian stance particularly in Book One.

34 Trans. according to Hill 1991 with modifications.

35 See the discussion by Barnes 1999; Ayres 2010: 142–170.

36 See Hill 1991 in his introductory essay at 147–151 who, however, acknowledges the overall thematic cohesion between Christ's mediatory role and the divine missions. Bochet 2007 defends the structure of Book Four, especially with regard to 4.2.11 and 4.2.12. See further Ayres 1998; Arnold 1991.

37 See Ayres 2010: 166–170; Rémy 1979: 573–574.

38 See for instance Plato, *Phileb*. 15a–b, 16c–e, 17c–e; Plotinus, *Enn*. 6.6.1; Porphyry, *Sent*. 11.37. See also the chapter of Janby in this volume for a fuller account of Augustine's philosophy of number.

39 Solignac 1958 examines the Pythagorean echoes in Augustine, which, he argues, reached him via Varro or Nicomachus of Gerasa (via Apuleius' Latin translation).
40 Noted by Hombert 2000: 73. I would add that the contrast at 4.3.13 between the devil who "grew high and mighty" and Christ who came "humble and lowly" echoes Augustine's polemic against Apuleius' demonology in Book Eight of his *Civ. Dei* where he "inverts" the demonic-human hierarchy by pointing to the inferiority of the light and airy demons, weighed down by their depravity, over against the moral loftiness of mortals who possess an inferior elemental make-up. Cf. Hoenig 2018: 272–277.
41 At *Doctr. Chr*. 2.28.43 Augustine suggests Plato may have obtained his wisdom from Jeremiah on his travels to Egypt, a view he later came to reject. See also Hoenig 2018: 225.
42 Concerning the theme of belief and contemplation of the truth, Augustine there had reproached those who are "so top-heavy with the load of their mortality that what they do not know they wish to give the impression of knowing, and what they wish to know they cannot, and so they block their own road to genuine understanding by asserting too categorically their own presumptuous opinions (. . .)."

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3 Porphyry's daemons as a threat for the Christians

Christine Hecht

The Neoplatonist philosopher Porphyry (234/5–305) bequeathed a large oeuvre,[1] although many of his writings are not extant or survive only in fragments.[2] This is a reason why the scholarship on Porphyry is abundant and sometimes divided on key issues. Important questions include the coherence of his work, as will be explicated below, and his attitude towards religious practices, because he took a middle position between the Neoplatonist philosophers Plotinus (205–270) and Iamblichus (c.245–c.325) – the former his teacher who delineated a rather immaterialised philosophy, the latter his pupil favouring rituals as part of philosophical progress.

The work on which I will focus in this chapter, the *Philosophia ex oraculis*, is part of the scholarly controversy. In this writing, Porphyry cites oracles spoken by different deities about different subjects, such as the establishment of statues, astrological questions, the mitigation of bad daemons and the significance of Christ and the Christians. Porphyry also provides commentaries and interpretations to the oracles, using these traditional authorities in order to point out the principles of his philosophy. However, the transmission of the writing is unfavourable, because it is not preserved as a whole, but only in fragments in the writings of Christian authors. The main witness is the bishop Eusebius of Caesarea (c.260–c.340), who cites the *Philosophia ex oraculis* several times in his *Praeparatio Evangelica* (*PE*).

The *Praeparatio Evangelica* is an apologetic work that seeks to show the superiority of the Christian religion over pagan religion. Porphyry's *Philosophia ex oraculis* was particularly appropriate for this purpose because the oracles themselves were important for pagans and Porphyry used them to verify his philosophical statements. Furthermore, Porphyry was one of the most reputable philosophers of his time. Eusebius, however, misrepresents Porphyry and – probably intentionally – misunderstood him, as will be shown below. Eusebius started to write his *Praeparatio Evangelica* about 313,[3] shortly before becoming bishop of Caesarea in Palestine. In this time, the Christian religion received more and more support from the state. After a period of several persecutions of Christians that culminated in the Great Persecution (303–311), Christianity could flourish since Constantine encouraged Christianity, giving Eusebius the opportunity to attack pagan religion and to demonstrate the superiority of the Christian religion. The

Praeparatio Evangelica served as an introduction to Christianity and explained the Christian identity, as Aaron Johnson has shown.[4]

In order to use Porphyry for his purpose, Eusebius shortens the citations, so that sometimes we have only the oracles and none of Porphyry's commentary. He also adds his own polemics, e.g. by highlighting special words (see below), meaning that Porphyry's philosophical remarks are often not clearly perceptible. Because of this, critical analysis is necessary in order to unearth Porphyry's own argumentation. Likewise, it is not appropriate to jump to conclusions about Porphyry's opinion from the sayings of the oracles, because where we have longer passages of his commentaries, it is obvious that he often argues in a finely nuanced and complex way.[5] It is therefore necessary to separate the text of the oracles and Porphyry's commentaries, insofar as they are transmitted,[6] in addition to making a careful examination of Eusebius' introductions and commentaries to Porphyry's text.[7]

In this chapter, I would like to focus on the topic of daemons in order to investigate the strategic and rhetorical aims of the Christian Eusebius towards Porphyry. The topic of daemons is especially suitable for this purpose because they are, on the one hand, seen as categorically evil by Christians, while the term, on the other hand, is flexibly used by the philosopher Porphyry. This discrepancy in the understanding of the term "daemon" allows us to shed light on the discourse between Christian writers and pagan philosophers and on their contest for the better arguments.

One of the main questions concerning the *Philosophia ex oraculis* is how the fragments, which deal with different rituals and combine Porphyry's philosophical system with oracles, can be connected with other writings of the Neoplatonist in which he clearly distances himself from cults and rituals.[8] Especially, Joseph Bidez made the case at the beginning of the twentieth century that the *Philosophia ex oraculis* should be dated to Porphyry's youth, because he seems to have favoured religious practices in this writing. Only after his encounter with the Platonist philosopher Plotinus his attitude became more "philosophical" and more critical towards religious practices, according to Bidez.[9] John J. O'Meara argued in the opposite direction by highlighting the presence of the "late" Porphyry also in the *Philosophia ex oraculis*,[10] and furthermore made the case that Porphyry's writing *De regressu animae* should be identified with the *Philosophia ex oraculis*. Pier Franco Beatrice expanded on this assumption by arguing that the *Philosophia ex oraculis* is a part of the anti-Christian writing *Contra Christianos*.[11] More recently, Christoph Riedweg rejected the latter suggestion by showing that the main focus of the fragments of the *Philosophia ex oraculis* is not Christianity.[12]

As the author of *Contra Christianos*, Porphyry gained the reputation of being an anti-Christian philosopher. In that work, he attacks the Christians as ignorant, anti-intellectual people, whose leaders, the apostles, are simple fishermen. He also criticises the divinity of Jesus Christ. In the most recent (German) translation and commentary, Matthias Becker has shown that the Christians were perceived as a strong threat to the political and religious system of the Roman Empire and also to the hegemonic position of pagan philosophy.[13] In the *Philosophia ex*

oraculis, Porphyry also speaks about Christians and Jesus Christ (343F.–346F. Smith). Whereas the Christians are represented as uneducated and godless (343F., 345F., 346F.), Jesus is only negatively judged in the words of an oracle (343F.), while he in fact is approved by Porphyry (345F.). Due to the opening passages, the work could be understood as an alternative to Christian salvation, which I will discuss below. Busine has raised the suggestion that Porphyry may have used the term λόγια in order to compete with the Old Testament, in which the prophecies usually are called λόγια.[14] That means we have to deal with the question to what extent Porphyry's text reacts to Christians as a group which represents an increasing threat to the state, and, to turn the question the other way round, to what extent Eusebius perceives Porphyry as a threat to Christianity. For that purpose, as I have already mentioned, the topic of daemons is of interest. My aim in this chapter is to consider how Porphyry presents daemons in the *Philosophia ex oraculis* and how Eusebius in turn presents Porphyry's daemons. In the first part of the following discussion I examine the meaning of the word δαίμων in Eusebius as well as in Porphyry's writings, highlighting how Eusebius presented Porphyry through his own lenses. In the second part I will discuss the question of whether the *Philosophia ex oraculis* is to be understood as an anti-Christian work.

Eusebius' citation technique and his concept of daemons

In the *Praeparatio Evangelica*, it is part of Eusebius' agenda to show that the deities that are worshipped by the pagans are not gods, but daemons, and not even good daemons, but evil daemons. According to him, the daemons are evil by nature: "For our divine oracles never call any daemon good, but say that all are bad who share this lot and even this appellation, since no other is truly and properly god except the One cause of all."[15] In book IV and V of the *PE*, Eusebius focuses on the topic of daemons and assigns the pagan cult to the evil daemons. Eusebius presents Jesus Christ, however, as the saviour who overthrows their deeds and effects on humans.[16] In order to support his statements he quotes pagan authors such as Porphyry, aiming to show first that the daemons are not good beings and second that Porphyry contradicts himself.

In book IV, Eusebius uses the fragments 326F.–329F. Smith of the *Philosophia ex oraculis* (= Eus. *PE* IV.19.8–20.1; 22.15–23.9), which appear in the *Praeparatio Evangelica* in the order 329F., 326F., 327F., 328F., in the context of his argument that animal sacrifices are not appropriate to God. He argues that Porphyry contradicts himself, by quoting sections from the *De abstinentia* (II.43; 52 = *PE* IV.19.1–2; II.38–39 = Eus. *PE* IV.22.1–4; II.40–41 = Eus. *PE* IV.22.5–9; II.41–42 = Eus. *PE* IV.22.10–12), where Porphyry denounces animal sacrifices, and sections from the *Philosophia ex oraculis* (329F. Smith = Eus. *PE* IV.20.1; 326F. = Eus. *PE* IV.23.1–5; 327F. = Eus. *PE* IV.23.6; 328F. = Eus. *PE* IV.23.7–9). In *De abstinentia* II.43 and 52, Porphyry remarks that the wise person should abstain from daemons and from animal sacrifices. After that, Eusebius quotes fragment 329F. There, in the oracle that Porphyry cites, Apollo recommends propitiating evil daemons through sacrifices. The citations of *De abstinentia* II.38–42 contain the

idea that bad daemons, not gods, mock human beings and lead them to sacrifice animals. In fragment 326F., animal sacrifice is again the topic. Eusebius uses these fragments as proof for the inconsistency of Porphyry's work and as a proof that the traditional Greek gods are, in fact, daemons. To that effect, he also cites the fragments 326F. and 327F., where it is said that the rulers of the bad daemons are Hecate and Sarapis.[17] In fragment 329F. (= *PE* IV.19), additionally, Eusebius introduces Apollo as a friend of the bad daemons.

The daemons are Eusebius' sustained focus also in book V of the *Praeparatio Evangelica*. At the beginning of the book, he stresses the negative aspects of their character, such as their causing the death of human beings (as in fragment 307F. Smith) or their susceptibility to passions (308F.–309F. Smith). If one examines the text of fragment 307F. in detail, Eusebius makes a surprising argument in the introduction and commentary to the fragment.[18]

> Now the author aforesaid writes as follows in his book which he entitled *Of the Philosophy to be derived from Oracles*, wherein he protests against betraying the secrets of the gods and binds himself by oath and exhorts others to conceal what he shall say and not publish it to many. What then were these matters of such importance? He affirms that Pan is a servant of Dionysos, and that he being one of the good daemons appeared once upon a time to those who were working in the fields. What ought a good deity, or at all events the advent of a good deity, to confer on those to whom the manifestation of the good has been vouchsafed? Did then any good result to the beholders of this good daemon, or have they found him an evil daemon, and learned this by practical experience? This admirable witness says indeed that those to whom this blessed sight was vouchsafed all died at once; for thus he speaks.[19]

This is Eusebius' introduction to Porphyry's text. Here, Eusebius quotes Porphyry as saying that Pan is a good daemon. However, in the text that Eusebius cites from Porphyry in this passage, Pan is not called a "good daemon" at all. In the oracle, he is referred to with the term δαίμων (307F., 26 Smith), but without any positive or negative attribution. In fact, the phrase ἀγαθὸς δαίμων does not appear anywhere in the extant fragments of the *Philosophia ex oraculis*. Therefore, the fact that the Christian author uses this term so often in connection with Porphyry's quotation in fragment 307F. reveals that its use is a manipulation of Porphyry's intention, because Eusebius combines a term ("daemon") which is definitely negative for a Christian, with a positive attribution ("good") – stressing this combination in a way that might not have been intended by Porphyry.

Let us however consider the possibility that Eusebius could have paraphrased parts of the *Philosophia ex oraculis* which are not extant, and that the term "good daemon" did appear in Porphyry's text. From other works, e.g. from *De abstinentia* or *Ad Marcellam*, it is clear that Porphyry distinguishes between bad, corrupting daemons and good ones.[20] Furthermore, in the *Philosophia ex oraculis*, πονηροί δαίμονες do play a role.[21] Therefore, it is possible that Porphyry treated also the positive counterpart in this text, perhaps even claiming that Pan was a

good daemon. That possibility, however, is unlikely: if we follow his argumentation in the *De abstinentia* II.38–42, Pan cannot be regarded as a good daemon, because, in fragment 307F., 16–22 Smith, Porphyry gives an oracle that describes Pan as a frightening god in a narrative about woodcutters. In contradistinction, Artemis would have been a good daemon, because the oracular response of the god Apollon is that one can call upon Artemis for help against danger in the woods or the field. So, in the narrative about the woodcutters, she helps men, as the good daemons in the *De abstinentia* do. Another suggestion – and the solution in my opinion – would be that Porphyry did not say that Pan is a good daemon and that Eusebius misrepresented Porphyry. It might be that Porphyry at least used the terms ἀγαθός and δαίμων but not as Eusebius represented it and that Eusebius could have found a way to misrepresent his opponent.[22] But, in any case, Eusebius emphasises the qualitative attribute "good" (ἀγαθός) here to such an extent that we cannot deny a strategic aim by the Christian. In the eyes of a Christian, a daemon can never be a good entity, as we have seen in the citation from the *Praeparatio Evangelica* at the beginning of this section. By combining the positive attribute "good" with a negatively connoted term, he provokes contradictory feelings in a (Christian) reader and leads him to a sceptical attitude towards Porphyry. Based on the evidence, however, it seems unlikely that Porphyry stressed the term "good" so much.

Porphyry's terminology and concept of sacrifices

Another fragment makes Eusebius' citation technique obvious and gives further hints about how the term "daemon" and Porphyry's concept of sacrifices are misrepresented by Eusebius.

> The aforesaid author, then, in his work which he entitled *Of the Philosophy to be derived from Oracles*, gives responses of Apollo enjoining the performance of animal sacrifices, and the offering of animals not to daemons only, nor only to the terrestrial powers, but also to the ethereal and heavenly powers. But in another work the same author, confessing that all, to whom the Greeks used to offer sacrifices by blood and slaughter of senseless animals, are daemons and not gods, says that it is not right nor pious to offer animal sacrifices to gods.[23]

The Oracle that follows in the quotation from the *Philosophia ex oraculis* describes animal sacrifices according to a classification of the gods. After quoting the oracle that was given by Apollo, Porphyry adds his own comments and explanation (315F. Smith). Based on Apollo's remarks, Porphyry explains the animal sacrifices that are due to each class of gods. The gods are divided into the following groups: gods on the earth, gods under the earth, gods of the heaven and gods of the sea. As I have shown above, Eusebius takes offence at calling daemons good, in general. And as we can see from the text I cited above (314F.), he rejects animal sacrifices for the gods, which he assumes to be related to (bad) daemons.

When we look at the quotation, we can see that Porphyry uses the term θεοί in this respect. In his introduction to the oracle, he is talking about a τάξις τῶν θεῶν ("hierarchy of the gods," 314F., 17 Smith). The oracle also mentions θεοί two times (314F., 26 and 42 Smith), then οἱ μάκαρες (line 19 Smith) and βασιλεῖς (line 21 Smith) as synonyms for the gods. Porphyry in his interpretation uses the term again four times (315F., 4, 5, 7, 21 Smith), and it appears once in the text of an oracle (315F., 20 Smith).

Let us first look into the terminology in use here. Eusebius is claiming that Porphyry assigns animal sacrifices to the θεοί. This is correct, as we have seen from the quotation. Aaron Johnson has dealt with Porphyry's terminology by mapping out a taxonomy of the divine.[24] He shows that there are many gradations in the taxonomy of the divine, and he argues that Porphyry's use of the language could be slightly flexible:

> Those beings that a late antique philosopher might recognize as daemons had been named gods for centuries. The philosopher would be faced with two courses of reacting to this situation: either a critical dismissal of traditional language or an accommodation to that language, possibly accompanied with reminders of the true nature and hierarchical location of the beings under discussion in any given text.[25]

In Porphyry's case, Johnson pleads for the second option. One striking proof is that in the *Vita Plotini* (10.22–25, 28–29) Porphyry could name the same entity a god and "one of the more divine daemons."[26] Therefore, we have to take into account that it is possible that Porphyry's terminology concerning "gods" and "daemons," θεοί and δαίμονες, might be not as rigid as Eusebius presents it. In my opinion, the Christian author is shaping the terminology in order to expose and vilify his opponent. He imputes that Porphyry uses the term as rigidly as he as a Christian would use it, which provides him the opportunity to point out seeming contradictions in the philosopher's work, as will be shown in the following.

Eusebius alludes to an inconsistency in Porphyry's work in the introduction to fragment 314F., when he says: "But in another work (ἐν ἑτέροις) the same author, confessing that all, to whom the Greeks used to offer sacrifices by blood and slaughter of senseless animals, are daemons and not gods."[27] ἐν ἑτέροις ("in another work") pertains to *De abstinentia*.[28] There Porphyry states a difference between gods and daemons: "Someone concerned for piety knows that no animate creature is sacrificed to the gods, but to other *daimones*, either good or bad."[29] Although Eusebius seems at first sight to be right in claiming that there is an inconsistency in Porphyry's work, we have to bear in mind that the philosopher differentiates. Porphyry stresses that his book *De abstinentia* is not for everyone, but for "the person who has thought about who he is and whence he has come and where he should try to go, and who has principles about food, and about other proper behaviour."[30] He differentiates between "ordinary people" and philosophers (*De abst*. II.3). The philosopher should abstain from animate creatures (*De abst*. II.3.1; I.27), and should rather focus on intellectual offerings (*De abst*.

II.43; 45). Furthermore, Porphyry gives a precise and differentiated classification of the divine hierarchy (II.37) and makes a distinction between good and bad daemons (II.38–42), e.g. in *De abst*. II.42.2–3: "They [i.e. the bad daemons] want to be gods, and the power that rules them wants to be thought the greatest god. It is they who rejoice in the 'drink-offerings and smoking meat' on which their pneumatic part grows fat, for it lives on vapours and exhalations, in a complex fashion and from complex sources, and it draws power from the smoke that rises from blood and flesh."[31] However, the δαίμονες κακοεργοί are not only pleased with bloody offerings by themselves, they also deceive human beings: "Then they prompt us to supplications and sacrifices, as if the beneficent gods were angry. They do such things because they want to dislodge us from a correct concept of the gods and convert us to themselves."[32] Thus, in *De abstinentia* Porphyry does not forbid sacrifices of animals in general, but seeks to dissuade a specific group, that is the philosophers, from making them. And he provides a more differentiated characterization of the *daimones* than Eusebius. It is, therefore, also fully possible that the content of the oracle in 314F. Smith of the *Philosophia ex oraculis* was intended for a general audience, whereas Porphyry's exegesis of it is probably meant for philosophers. His audience should learn how these oracles are to be understood.

Another point to bear in mind is that although Porphyry is presenting instructions concerning sacrifices in these fragments (314F. and 315F.), he is not giving his own opinion. Instead, he presents an unadorned exegesis of the oracle without adding his own views, in a similar manner to how they were presented in *De abstinentia*. That means, he is talking about sacrifices, but that need not to be understood as a request to sacrifice.

As with fragment 307F. Smith, Eusebius gives a tendentious introduction to 314F. Smith. He shows no concern for the distinction concerning the offerings that Porphyry proclaims for philosophers and other people. Fragment 314F. is quoted in the *Praeparatio Evangelica*, book IV, chapter 8. Only in chapter 15 of the same book he does cite the above-mentioned aspect from *De abstinentia*, in which Porphyry is talking about the philosopher who is expected not to offer animate sacrifices to the gods. The distinction between good and bad daemons is mentioned by Eusebius also in chapter 15. By making the distinction exclusively between gods and daemons in the introduction to 314F., Eusebius obscures Porphyry's subtle remarks concerning the divine hierarchy. In addition, he only provides partial quotations of the text, meaning that Porphyry may have given further explanations about animal sacrifices (as in *De abstinentia*), which Eusebius opted not to quote. This reduction of complexity helps Eusebius portray Porphyry as an enemy of the Christians,[33] because he presents Porphyry as he would stand in for ideas that contradict Christian sentiments.

Another fragment lends support to the view that the entities that Porphyry calls "gods" (θεοί) are actually counted as daemons in a philosophical hierarchy of divine beings. In Fragment 347F. Smith, Porphyry discusses the so-called "binding" of the gods. That is, the calling of a deity in order to get in contact with it. In his opening remarks, he states that there are gods that react more willingly to

the callings of the humans than others. The first mentioned deities have a good character, the latter are bad and do harm. This distinction recalls the classification of good and evil daemons that we can also see in the *De abstinentia* (II.38–40). Whereas the good ones help human beings, the bad ones mock them: "Then they prompt us to supplications and sacrifices, as if the beneficient gods were angry. They do such things because they want to dislodge us from a correct concept of the gods and convert us to themselves."[34] A reason that the same beings are called once θεοί (gods) and once δαίμονες (daemons) could be that in the *Philosophia ex oraculis* oracles are in the centre of the text and these employ a traditional discourse that interchangeably made use of θεοί and δαίμονες. This can be seen at fragment 318F., 13 Smith, where Pan is called θεός in the oracle, whereas in 307F. the oracle calls Pan a δαίμων. As the more systematic treatise, *De abstinentia* would however use a more technical vocabulary.

Was Porphyry's *Philosophia ex oraculis* an anti-Christian writing?

Let us return to the question whether the *Philosophia ex oraculis* is an anti-Christian text, and to what extent Porphyry was seen as an "enemy" by the Christians. Via the topic of gods and daemons, we have seen that Eusebius is addressing this theme in a way that implies Porphyry being a serious opponent of the Christians. Already in chapter 6 of book IV of the *Praeparatio Evangelica* Eusebius exposes Porphyry claiming he has a special relationship to daemons:

> But as there are among the Greeks historians and philosophers without number, I judge the most suitable of all in reference to the subjects before us to be that very friend of the daemons, who in our generation is celebrated for his false accusations against us. For he of all the philosophers of our time seems to have been most familiar with daemons and those whom he calls gods, and to have been their advocate, and to have investigated the facts concerning them much the most accurately.[35]

This is Eusebius' introduction to fragment 303F. Smith, which is the first fragment of the *Philosophia ex oraculis*.[36] Again, in the introduction to fragment 331F. Smith, Eusebius refers to Porphyry as the daemons' advocate: "And the evidence of this shall be that self-same daemons' advocate, who in his book entitled *Of the Philosophy to be derived from Oracles*, speaks word for word as follows."[37] Eusebius repeatedly stresses the topic of daemons. By doing that, he is making Porphyry's concept of daemons appear anti-Christian, although it was not likely so intended by the philosopher. In fact, there are no clear indications in this direction in the transmitted remains of the *Philosophia ex oraculis*. The topic of daemons does not entail an anti-Christian intent by Porphyry. As already mentioned, Porphyry uses the term "daemon" and is talking about "daemons," since he cites oracles that use traditional language. It is in Eusebius' interest, however,

to denounce pagan philosophy and religion by emphasising a term that has negative connotations for a Christian.

Conclusive Remarks

Lastly, I wish to revisit the question whether the *Philosophia ex oraculis* as a whole can be understood as an anti-Christian text. The Platonist introduces his text as a way of salvation. In 303F. Smith, which belongs to the beginning of the text, he says: "Sure, then, and steadfast is he who draws his hopes of salvation from this as from the only sure source."[38] While this claim could appear to be an alternative to Christian salvation, it does not seem that the addressees in this context are Christians. Rather, Porphyry appeals to a group of "initiated." Fragment 304F. Smith of the *Philosophia ex oraculis* says:

> And do thou endeavor to avoid publishing these above all things, and casting them even before the profane for the sake of reputation, or gain, or any unholy flattery. For so there would be danger not only to thee for transgressing these injunctions, but also to me for lightly trusting thee who couldst not keep the benefits secret to thyself. We must give them then to those who have arranged their plan of life with a view to the salvation of the soul.[39]

Thus, there is no evidence to support the claim that Christianity was a main topic of the *Philosophia ex oraculis*.[40] Whereas *Contra Christianos* evidently was written against the Christians, the direction of impact of the *Philosophia ex oraculis* cannot be answered with the same clearness. Themes that Porphyry is talking about in this text, like the daemons, are understood or made to appear anti-Christian by Eusebius. Porphyry's addressees are not the Christians, but rather people who are interested in philosophy. The text stresses and uses elements that are essential for the pagan self-conception, as for example, the fact that Porphyry uses oracles for his argumentation. So, even if not intended as an anti-Christian text by Porphyry, Eusebius understands it as at least antithetical to Christianity and as such he attacked it as a threat, staging, and ridiculing the Neoplatonist as an enemy by representing his views on the daemons.

Notes

1 This chapter has been written in connection with the research at the project G01 "Platonism and Christianity in late antiquity – Porphyry's interpretation, defense and re-ordering of pagan cultic practice: A threat to the Christian order?" of the Collaborative Research Center 923 "Threatened Order – Societies under Stress" (University of Tübingen), which is sponsored by the DFG (German Research Foundation). I would like to thank David DeMarco (Tübingen) and Aaron Johnson (Cleveland, TN) for valuable comments, as well as for proofreading.

2 Goulet 2012: 1289–1314.

3 Johnson 2006: 11–12.

4 Johnson 2006.

5 Cf. Johnson 2013: 79.
6 Cf. Johnson 2013: 81.
7 Magny 2014 also pointed to the significance of being aware of the citation contexts, when dealing with Porphyry.
8 Riedweg 2005: 155–158; Tanaseanu-Döbler 2009: 120 and 2017: 137–140 provide a detailed survey of the scholarly debate.
9 Bidez 1913: 15–28.
10 O'Meara 1959 and 1969.
11 Beatrice, 1988, 1989, 1992, 1993. Cf. Becker 2016: 15, n. 84; 16, n. 92.
12 Riedweg 2005.
13 Becker 2016: 32–85.
14 Busine 2004; cf. also Busine 2005: 292–295.
15 Eusebius, *PE* IV.5.4; Gifford 1903: 155.
16 Becker 2016: 368, n. 1.
17 Porphyry, *Philos. ex orac*. 326F., 1–3 Smith = Eus. *PE* IV.22: "And who the power presiding over them happens to be, shall be made clear by the same author again, who says that the rulers of the wicked daemons are Sarapis and Hecate. (τίς τε ἡ προεστῶσα αὐτῶν δύναμις τυγχάνει, ὁ αὐτὸς πάλιν διασαφήσει, τοὺς ἄρχοντας τῶν πονηρῶν δαιμόνων λέγων εἶναι τὸν Σάραπιν καὶ τὴν Ἑκάτην.)"; Gifford 1903: 191.
18 Since I have analysed and discussed fragment 307F. Smith at length in a paper (Hecht, forthcoming), I only cite part of the Greek text and only mention the major aspects for the argumentation here.
19 Porphyry, *Philos. ex orac.* 307F. Smith = Eus. *PE* V.5: "γράφει δὲ ταῦτα ὁ δεδηλωμένος ἐν οἷς ἐπέγραψεν Περὶ τῆς ἐκ λογίων φιλοσοφίας, ἔνθα μαρτύρεται μὴ τὰ ἀπόρρητα τῶν θεῶν ἐκφαίνειν, ἐπομνύμενός τε αὐτὸς καὶ παραγγέλλων κρύπτειν καὶ μὴ εἰς πολλοὺς ἐκφέρειν τὰ λεχθησόμενα. τίνα δὲ ἦν τὰ τοιαῦτα; τὸν Πᾶνα Διονύσου φησὶ θεράποντα εἶναι, τοῦτον δὲ τῶν ἀγαθῶν ὄντα δαιμόνων ἐπιφανέντα ποτὲ τοῖς κατ' ἀγρὸν γεωπονοῦσιν. τί χρῆν ἀγαθὸν ὄντα παρασχεῖν ἢ πάντως ἀγαθοῦ τινος παρουσίαν τοῖς τῆς θεοφανείας τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ κατηξιωμένοις; ἆρ' οὖν ὑπῆρξεν ἀγαθόν τι τοῖς θεαταῖς τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ δαίμονος, ἢ κακὸν εἰλήχασιν δαίμονα ἔργῳ τῆς πείρας ἠσθημένοι; φησὶν γοῦν ὁ θαυμάσιος μάρτυς τοὺς τῆς ἀγαθῆς ταύτης θέας ἠξιωμένους ἄθρουν θάνατον ὑπομεῖναι λέγων ὧδε·"; Gifford 1903: 208.
20 Porphyry, *De abst*. II.38–43; *Ad Marc*. 21. For Porphyry's daemonology: Wolff 1856: 214–299; Timotin 2012: 208–215; Johnson 2013: 83–101; cf. also Muscolino 2010: 103–123.
21 Porphyry, *Philos. ex orac.* 326F., 327F., 329F., 346F. Smith.
22 I got the idea from Aaron Johnson (Cleveland, TN), who pointed out that Eusebius could not have made outright lies about Porphyry because his audience would have recognised it.
23 Porphyry, *Philos. ex orac*. 314F. Smith = Eus. *PE* IV.8.4–5: "ὁ δὴ οὖν προδηλωθεὶς ἀνὴρ ἐν αὐτοῖς οἷς ἐπέγραψεν Περὶ τῆς ἐκ λογίων φιλοσοφίας χρησμοὺς τίθησι τοῦ Ἀπόλλωνος, τὰς διὰ ζῴων θυσίας ἐργάζεσθαι παρακελευομένου καὶ μὴ μόνοις δαίμοσιν μηδὲ μόναις ταῖς περιγείοις δυνάμεσιν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ταῖς αἰθερίοις καὶ οὐρανίοις ζῳοθυτεῖν. ἐν ἑτέροις δ' ὁ αὐτὸς δαίμονας, ἀλλ' οὐ θεοὺς εἶναι ὁμολογῶν ἅπαντας, οἷς Ἕλληνες τὰς δι' αἱμάτων καὶ ζῴων ἀλόγων σφαγῆς ἐπετέλουν θυσίας, μὴ χρῆναι μηδὲ ὅσιον εἶναι θεοῖς ζῳοθυτεῖν φησίν."; Gifford 1903.
24 Johnson 2013: 83–101. Recently, Brisson 2018 has depicted Porphyry' theological system and the position of the "daemon" in it. He draws mainly on the *De abstinentia*, while omitting the fragments of the *Philosophia ex oraculis*.
25 Johnson 2013: 90.
26 *Ibid*.: 91.
27 Porphyry, *Philos. ex orac*. 314F., 6–8 Smith = Eus. *PE* IV.8.5: ἐν ἑτέροις δ' ὁ αὐτὸς δαίμονας, ἀλλ' οὐ θεοὺς εἶναι ὁμολογῶν ἅπαντας, οἷς Ἕλληνες τὰς δι' αἱμάτων καὶ ζῴων ἀλόγων σφαγῆς ἐπετέλουν θυσίας; Gifford 1903: 158.
28 Cf. Eusebius, *PE* IV.10.1.

29 Porphyry, *De abst*. II.36.5; Clark 2013: 70. Cited in Eusebius, *PE* IV.15.1.
30 Porphyry, *De abst*. I.27.1; Clark 2013: 40.
31 Porphyry, *De abst*. II.42.2–3; Clark 2013: 73.
32 Porphyry, *De abst*. II.40.2; Clark 2013: 72.
33 Männlein-Robert 2014: 123 points out that the use of "Feindbilder" is an important strategy in the polemic between Christians and pagan philosophers like Porphyry.
34 Porphyry, *De abst*. II.40.2; Clark 2013: 72.
35 Eusebius, *PE* IV.6.2; Gifford 1903: 156.
36 Smith provides less context. However, the sentence that begins before the fragment that is quoted by Smith is important because it gives the impression that Eusebius principally quotes the *Philosophia ex oraculis* in order to expose Porphyry as a friend of daemons.
37 Porphyry, *Philos. ex orac*. 331F. Smith = Eus. *PE* VI.1.1: "τούτων δὲ ἔλεγχος αὐτὸς ἐκεῖνος ὁ τῶν δαιμόνων προήγορος ἐν οἷς ἐπέγραψε Περὶ τῆς ἐκ λογίων φιλοσοφίας ὧδε λέγων πρὸς λέξιν."; Gifford 1903: 254.
38 Porphyry, *Philos. ex orac.* 303F. = Eusebius, *PE* IV.7.1: "Βέβαιος δὲ καὶ μόνιμος ὁ ἐντεῦθεν ὡς ἂν ἐκ μόνου βεβαίου τὰς ἐλπίδας τοῦ σωθῆναι ἀρυτόμενος·"; Gifford 1903: 157.
39 Porphyry. *Philos. ex orac.* 304F. = Eus. *PE* IV.8.1: "Σὺ δ' εἴπερ τι καὶ ταῦτα πειρῶ μὴ δημοσιεύειν μηδ' ἄχρι καὶ τῶν βεβήλων ῥίπτειν αὐτὰ δόξης ἕνεκα ἢ κέρδους ἤ τινος ἄλλης οὐκ εὐαγοῦς κολακείας. κίνδυνος γὰρ οὐ σοὶ μόνον τὰς ἐντολὰς παραβαίνοντι ταύτας, ἀλλὰ κἀμοὶ ῥᾳδίως πιστεύσαντι τῷ στέγειν παρ' ἑαυτῷ μὴ δυναμένῳ τὰς εὐποιίας. δοτέον δὴ τοῖς τὸν βίον ἐνστησαμένοις πρὸς τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς σωτηρίαν."; Gifford 1903: 157–158.
40 Riedweg 2005: 187.

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Part II

Cosmology

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4 Patristic reflections on formless matter

Enrico Moro

The encounter between Platonism and Christian thought in Late Antiquity, doubtless a crucial turning point in the entire history of Western philosophy, was and still remains an extremely complex phenomenon and as such it continues to elude too rigid definitions. Thus, the most appropriate method to appreciate the extreme complexity of the relation between Platonism and Christian thought entails facing circumscribed case studies, which allows us to catch the details destined to be lost if summarised within excessively clear outlines.

Discussions about the origin of the universe constitute a prime example of this complexity. Concerning this point, studies have traditionally described a radical opposition between two theoretical models, which are totally antagonistic, respectively named "emanationism" and "creationism." To summarise: the proponents of emanation consider the material world as the result of an eternal process, necessary and stratified, activated by the overabundant causal power of the First Principle. On the other hand, creationists describe the voluntary and immediate act by which God forges the sensible universe, creating it out of nothing in a first timeless instance, which constitutes the beginning of time.

Although it is not totally unfounded, this approach risks concealing the fact that Christian thinkers never had a univocal attitude of complete rejection of the Neoplatonic conceptual models, as well as the fact that, in trying to explain the divine act of creation, they used ideas, metaphysical hypotheses and cosmological principles that were conceived within this school of thought. In this sense, the dual attitude which they reserved for the philosophical doctrine of formless matter is emblematic. If, on the one hand, they unanimously refused to consider matter as a principle co-eternal with God–or eternally "flown" from Him–then, on the other hand, they extensively used (with significant adjustments) the Neoplatonic doctrine of prime matter (πρώτη ὕλη), considered as an incorporeal substratum, lacking shape and quality.

With the purpose of highlighting this dual orientation of Christian thought, this chapter aims to trace the presence of the concept of matter in patristic hexameral literature, focusing mainly on the exegetical writings devoted to the biblical book of Genesis by some of the most important Greek and Latin Christian thinkers who lived between the second and fourth centuries AD. The study is structured into two parts. The first part analyses the theoretical arguments used by patristic

thinkers to deny the existence of a material substratum, co-eternal with God; the second part, then, examines how these thinkers appropriated and made use of the philosophical notion of matter, in order to demonstrate the functions and the theoretical status that it faced within the Christian doctrine of the creation out of nothing.

Denial of the eternity of matter

The doctrine of the creation of matter out of nothing does not represent an original and fundamental fact for the biblical revelation and Christian tradition. It, however, gradually began to assert itself, being elaborated since the beginning of the second century, probably within the context of the anti-Gnostic debate.[1] A crucial role for the constitution and legitimacy of the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* was played by the interpretation of the first chapter of Genesis, a text that was, and not by chance, extensively commented on by Christian thinkers throughout the first centuries AD.

Origen of Alexandria (185–254) was the author of one of the most influential exegetical comments related to the Genesis text, which, unfortunately for us, has since been lost. As testified by a precious fragment preserved by Eusebius (265–c.340), bishop of Caesarea, in book VII of his *Preparation for the Gospel*,[2] the theologian from Alexandria applied a complex polemic strategy, resorting to a sequence of reasoning which aimed at denying the existence of an eternal and un-generated matter.

The structure and development of Origen's argumentation can be summarised as follows. Origen begins with an initial argument that attempts to reject the possibility of equalising God's operative power with that of human craftsmen. Those who argue from the way any sculptor or carpenter might go about their work to deny the fact that God has the capability to produce things in the absence of an eternal material substratum, set an unacceptable limitation to His power, with the consequence of excluding that He can create whatever He wants.[3] Such reasoning, though, reveals an undeniable "categorial shortcoming,"[4] to the extent that it does not only claim to equate two realities which are totally different, but also it does not take into account the fact that it is divine Providence itself that makes materials available for human artisans.

The second argument, consequentially, intends to show how the admission of ungenerated matter conflicts with the doctrine of divine Providence towards the cosmos. Origen argues that those who admit the existence of a divine Providence also consent that due to His own power and wisdom, God can create the qualities that are necessary for the perfect organisation of the world; after all, this belief is also shared by the supporters of ungenerated matter.[5] Assuming that this is true, Origen concludes that there is no reason to exclude that God is also the Creator of the substance which is necessary for the existence of the material world.[6]

The following arguments further highlight that the admission of the existence of an ungenerated matter is incompatible with the statement of a divine providential action towards the cosmos. If matter is indeed ungenerated, the encounter

between God and matter, as well as the creation of the cosmos, would be an accidental event: hence, nominating God as "Creator," "Father," "Benefactor," "Good" would be nonsensical. The purpose of this argument is clearly to address an internal critique of the position of its opponents, by highlighting that admitting the existence of an ungenerated matter is incompatible with the "philosophical" concept of God, which can be deduced from Plato's *Timaeus*.[7]

Furthermore, denying the divine Providence forces one to admit the existence of a "more antique Providence," able to give God a quantity of matter which is suitable for the dimension of the cosmos and to make the exercise of His demiurgic function possible: the admission of a higher Providence, once again, would be in contrast with one of the cornerstones of the philosophical doctrine of principles, according to which there is no reality that can, logically and ontologically, precede the First Principle.[8]

Furthermore, claiming that God received formless matter by a principle prior to Himself, is self contradicting: on that assumption, indeed, it would not be possible to explain the correspondence between the quantity of matter and the dimension of the existing cosmos, as well as the capacity of the material substratum to receive all the qualities that the divine Creator awarded it.[9] Origen's argument moves forward until it takes the doctrine of the eternity of matter to its extreme consequences. If prime matter were available to God without the participation of Divine Providence, it would be unnecessary to admit the existence of Providence itself, whose work would not add anything to the work of Fate.[10] In the same way, if Providence restricted itself to ordering and tidying up an eternal matter, it would have done nothing more than what is ultimately caused by an ungenerated reality: its work would then be redundant and the requirement to consider God as Creator and Builder of the cosmos would be needless.[11] The arguments explained in *PE* VII.20.6–7 are ultimately organised as a *reductio ad absurdum* of the doctrine of eternal matter, showing that it is unsustainable as long as it claims that the creation of the cosmos is accidental and that the demiurgic action is unnecessary.[12]

In the footsteps of Origen and by making use of an argumentative strategy that by then had become canonical, even Christian thinkers of the subsequent centuries continue to decisively refute the thesis of the eternity of matter. Among those who did this with great commitment is unquestionably Basil the Great (c.330–379), who wrote nine homilies on the *Hexaemeron* before the community of Caesarea, most likely during Lent in the year 378.[13]

Commenting on the text Gen 1:2a, the bishop of Caesarea rails at the "forgers of the truth" who, relying on the letter of the biblical text, conceive eternal matter to be on a par with God. Such an interpretation, observes Basil, inevitably leads to absurd consequences. First, it obliges us to give equal dignity to two realities separated by the maximum ontological distance: on the one side we have God, while on the other we have the engendered matter, lacking in quality and form, fully indeterminate and without beauty.[14] Second, it prevents us from adequately thinking about the correspondence between the substance of matter and the divine science and power. In fact, in the event that such correspondence was complete, matter would be able to measure all divine knowledge, whereas, otherwise, a

limitation in the divine power of action would be produced: both consequences, Basil concludes, are evidently unsustainable.

It is, therefore, completely inappropriate to conceive the divine action in artisan terms, claiming that God would have acted extrinsically on a pre-existing matter, merely giving it shape and form without creating its substance.[15] The principle that art is subsequent to matter, in fact, does not apply in the case of God, who, having designed the nature of the world, has created both the forms and the suitable material to receive them.[16] Precisely the correspondence between matter and form is, ultimately, at the basis of the perfection of the divine works, which shows through the order of creation and the possession of a convenient nature from each of its components.[17]

Like Basil, Ambrose of Milan (c.340–397) also pronounced nine homilies about the six days of creation during Lent of 386 or 387.[18] According to the bishop of Milan, the first verse of Scripture already offers a clear indication of the creation of matter; in fact, the biblical text clarifies how God is the Creator of the world and not, like Plato's Demiurge, a mere architect who works on a given material imitating a pre-existing ideal model.[19]

However, it is in his commentary on the text of Gen 1:2a that Ambrose more decisively refutes the doctrine of the eternity of matter (i.e. the doctrine according to which matter is not only co-eternal with God, but also exists independently of divine agency). First of all, he proposes an interesting argument that fits in the context of a traditional polemical vein of anti-Gnostic mould.[20] Those who affirm that matter pre-existed the divine action, observes the Milanese bishop, should clarify where it was, but they are unable to provide a satisfactory explanation of it. Affirming that matter was somewhere, sure enough, would lead to the unjustifiable admission of the existence of an additional ungenerated reality; maintaining that it was in God, conversely, would lead to the absurd thesis that God himself, invisible and inviolable, would be the receptacle of the matter of the world.[21]

An additional argument opposed to the theory of the eternity of matter is found in a passage from the third homily, where Ambrose, recapitulating the meaning of the text Gen 1:1, reiterates that God is the author of created natures, and not a simple discoverer of their image. If matter was truly ungenerated and co-eternal with God, he observes, a series of unsustainable consequences would arise. First, it would not be possible to validate the meeting and cooperation between the impassive divine power and the passive nature of matter. Second, a limitation to the divine power should be given, declaring it incapable of putting into place the matter necessary for its own work. Third, the divine causality would be considered superfluous, in so far as it would be surprising to think of an eternal reality (matter) as in need of being organised and beautified from the outside. Fourth, a hypothetical regulative action from God would have produced something inferior (order and beauty) to what was already autonomously present in matter (existence).[22]

Among the listeners of Ambrose's homilies was perhaps Augustine (354–430), who, in turn, would strongly criticise the doctrine of the eternity of matter. The polemical strategy put forth by Augustine is on the whole simpler than that of his

predecessors, and is limited to re-proposing what we might call the argument of omnipotence. As we have seen, this traditional argument, which recurs on several occasions in Augustinian works, is aimed at denying any "auxiliary" function to formless matter, emphasising in this manner the absoluteness of divine omnipotence.[23]

The relative simplicity of this line of argument is, however, accompanied by a considerable effort in showing how the status of the divine act of creation is irreducible to the technical-demiurgic model. In this regard, the description of the creative act outlined in a well-known quote from book XI of the *Confessiones* proves emblematic. In contrast to human architects–the bishop of Hippo notes in this context–God works not only without the mediation of the senses, limbs and handcrafted tools, but also instantaneously, without hesitation or change of his own will and knowledge. The divine knowledge of the created realities, moreover, is not subsequent to their realisation: God, indeed, on the one hand eternally contemplates in Himself the ideal Reasons of all things, while, on the other, He does not refer to extrinsic or independent criteria to evaluate the goodness of His works. Finally, the divine act of creation disregards any spatial and temporal limitation, it does not involve any effort and determines the existence of realities that cannot exist independently, if not supported by the power of their Creator.[24]

Matter, form and creation

If, on the one hand, Christian thinkers proved to be strong opponents of the doctrine of the eternity of matter, then, on the other, some of them made extensive use of the concept of formless matter coined in the philosophical tradition to explain the origin and constitution of the physical universe. Without claiming to provide a comprehensive picture of the presence and use of the notion of matter in the context of patristic thought, I would like to examine two specific case studies, in order to show how patristic thinkers operated a "functional appropriation" of both vocabulary and concepts of philosophical origin, modifying and adapting them to the needs dictated by the Christian doctrine of creation out of nothing.

The first case on which I would like to concentrate concerns the possibility of acquiring knowledge of formless matter. On the basis of the tradition of thought deriving from Plato's *Timaeus*, Christian thinkers underline on several occasions the difficulty of knowing and fully defining a reality that is in itself shapeless and obscure, identifying the subtraction of forms and qualities perceivable in the corporeal realities as the only way to reach it.

Two particularly evident examples of similar recourse to Platonic terminology and concepts can be found in the writings of Origen and Augustine. Towards the end of Book IV of the treatise *On the First Principles*, Origen reports the following argument, which he attributes to some thinkers who intend to show that qualities are added to an underlying matter. When we observe an individual, we normally grasp a series of accidental characters (e.g. his actions, his being in a place), which, however, do not determine his essence and do not come under the concept of man: this means that it is possible to mentally consider the individual

in question regardless of these accidental characteristics. Similarly, doing away with the thought of all the qualities that normally overlap with matter (hardness or softness, heat or cold, humidity or aridity), it will be possible to grasp "through a counterfeit conception" the material substratum as it is in itself, stripped of all qualities.[25]

An argument analogous to that of Origen is proposed by Augustine in book XII of the *Confessions*. Turning to matter, he observes, our thought is in a sense devoid of footholds, having before itself neither an intelligible nor a sensible form: to deal with this situation of *impasse*, human thinking has no alternative but to strive "to know ignoring or to ignore knowing" (*nosse ignorare vel ignorare noscendo*).[26] Aiming at knowing matter is therefore, in a way, comparable to the claim of seeing darkness or hearing silence. As a knowledge of these "realities" is possible exclusively through a mixture of knowledge and ignorance and can be achieved through privation,[27] formless matter can be isolated only by subtracting with the thought any formal residue actually present in the corporeal realities.[28]

Both Origen and Augustine, as we have seen, not only share the difficulty, common in the Platonic tradition, if not the impossibility, of gaining a clear knowledge of the nature of formless matter, but they also refer to the traditional method of subtraction or abstraction of forms. Here too, they place themselves in the wake of the Greek philosophical tradition: the first complete formulation of the cognitive process of subtraction (in Greek ἀφαίρεσις) thus described, indeed, can be found in the discussion of the concept of substance in book Z of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*.[29] The application of this cognitive method in relation to prime matter, then, is widely confirmed in the later tradition: its use is attributed to Plato and is found, for example, in thinkers of Platonic orientation such as Numenius, Plotinus and Calcidius.[30]

The outcome of the mental process of the "subtraction" of forms and qualities in relation to a specific corporeal reality is, in this perspective, not equivalent to an absolute negation and does not result in pure nothingness, but rather it allows us to recognise the necessary otherness of matter with respect to the realities present in the sphere of the corporeal world. In this sense, the "subtraction" method does not represent a demonstrative, argumentative procedure (it does not prove, in other words, the necessity of the existence of a material nature), but a form of direct apprehension, although not clear and defined, of the existence of a totally shapeless material residue underlying the formal qualities.

What we have just pointed out is not, however, the only way in which the ἀφαίρεσις method is called into question by patristic thinkers. A different use of this method, for example, is made by Basil in the first of his *Homilies*: commenting on the text Gen 1:1, in fact, the bishop of Caesarea observes how it is useless to look for "the substance proper" of the earth, as well as striving to grasp "the substrate itself" or a "nature without quality." Everything that is found "around it" actually has the function of completing the substance, and, once removed by thought all the surrounding qualities, "the substrate will be nothing."[31]

It is not immediately clear in what direction the reasoning developed by Basil goes, and, not by chance, the interpretations that scholars have given are different. According to some, Basil would have found inspiration in some pages of the

Enneads, sharing the Plotinian intent to deny matter any residual form of substantial being in order to exclude the existence of a material principle co-eternal with God.[32] Others, more recently and in the light of a more in-depth comparison with the technical terminology employed by the commentators of Aristotle, have pointed out that Basil does not use the ἀφαίρεσις method to deny the existence of a material substratum; rather, his intent would be to show the uselessness of every mental effort aimed at grasping an underlying substance, or to show the impossibility of taking away from the earth some or all of its essential qualities, leaving the essence expressed by its definition intact.[33]

A similar reasoning to that of Basil, but expressed in a more detailed speculative context, is found in the exegetical work dedicated to the interpretation of the creation account by his brother Gregory of Nyssa (335–c.395).[34] In the first pages of his writing, Gregory observes that in the divine nature there is a perfect coincidence between will and power: from the identity between will and wisdom and between knowledge and power, then, it follows that, in creating, God has instantaneously implemented the content of his thought. In the creation act, in other words, all the attributes of God were simultaneously manifested: will, wisdom, power and existence of beings.[35] The affirmation of the original and unified combination of the divine attributes allows Gregory to resolve some difficulties that emerge regarding the mode of realisation and the origin of "matter." What needs to be explained, in particular, is how a material, visible reality, endowed with quantity, determination and magnitude can derive from God, whose nature is totally devoid of these specific characteristics.[36]

By virtue of the combination of wisdom, power and will – observes Gregory – God has simultaneously created all the things by which matter is constituted (light-heavy, dense-rare, etc.), things that in themselves are thoughts (ἔννοιαι) and bare concepts (νοήματα): if on the one hand it is from their combination that matter is derived, then, on the other, none of them is matter.[37] Adopting the same perspective, in another of his writings, Gregory offers a characterisation of the ἀφαίρεσις method analogous to that provided by Basil: "For we shall find all matter to be composed of qualities and if it were stripped bare of these on its own, it could in no way be grasped in idea."[38]

The reasoning developed by Gregory, even more than that of Basil, does not appear as immediately comprehensible, starting from the use of the term ὕλη, which in this context seems to designate the "material corporeality as a whole" rather than prime matter.[39] It is no coincidence that the evaluations provided by scholars regarding Gregory's position are rather divergent. While some have labelled it as "idealist," seeing Gregory as a sort of "Berkeley *avant la lettre*,"[40] others, conversely, have committed themselves to showing how the "ideal" nature of bodily qualities, which in themselves possess the status of "physical aspects" of material objects, depends on their being separable by abstraction, and, as such, intelligible and definable.[41]

Equally rich was the debate about the possible sources of the so-called "bundle theory," namely of the conception of "matter" understood as a combination of immaterial qualities (συνδρομὴ τῶν ποιοτήτων). According to one of the most

widespread interpretative hypotheses, Gregory (like Basil) would have been influenced by Plotinus. In the fourth treatise of the second *Ennead*, indeed, Plotinus takes into consideration the objection that, for the purposes of the composition of bodies, nothing would be necessary in addition to the greatness and the qualities:[42] according to the view discussed and criticised by Plotinus, the first bodies would not be in any need of matter (their constitution, in fact, would depend solely on a mixture of forms), and matter would end up being an empty name. For his part, Plotinus himself in many other instances characterises matter as a purely potential and totally heterogeneous entity with respect to the formal principle (from whose action it cannot be concretely modified), with important repercussions on the level of the ontology of the sensible world.[43] In doing so, in fact, he gives the impression of adopting a conceptual "pseudo-hylomorphic" paradigm, which, not by chance, has been defined as an "integral idealism" and as a radical form of "phenomenalism" in relation to the corporeal world.[44]

This line of interpretation, whose merit should be recognised for having highlighted an indisputable affinity between Gregory's (and Basil's) and Plotinus's reflections, has waned somewhat in the light of subsequent studies. Indeed, as rightly pointed out, on the one hand it does not seem to adequately consider some significant differences between the texts of Basil and Gregory;[45] on the other hand, it does not sufficiently take account of the fact that Gregory could have more easily been inspired by other sources. Among those, most probably, is a passage from book IV of Origen's treatise *On the First Principles*, where we read an apologetic argument that closely resembles the reflection proposed by Gregory.[46] In this context, Origen observes that no substance can exist without qualities and that only with thought is it possible to separate them from the material that receives them.[47] Precisely for this reason, some argued that bodily nature is nothing more than a conglomerate of qualities, as it is evident from the impossibility of isolating an underlying substrate through the method of subtraction. Taken to its extreme consequences, Origen observes, such a position fits perfectly with the Christian faith: on the one hand, it clarifies that there is no uncreated substrate independent of qualities and on the other it leads to the conclusion that the material corporeity, as a conglomerate of qualities created by God, is itself entirely created.

In the final analysis, Gregory's argument collects a series of conceptual elements taken from the previous philosophical tradition (the resolution of the corporeity through the abstraction of its properties, the doctrine of the incorporeity of qualities, the interpretation of intelligible qualities as divine thoughts), but combining them in a new and original way. In doing so, Gregory uses notions and doctrines of Platonic origin to characterise matter in "non-Platonic" terms – that is not as the necessary metaphysical condition of corporeity, but as corporeity itself considered as a whole – ultimately radicalising the Origenian position with a view to defending the faith in divine omnipotence.[48]

The matter-form relation

The second case study I would like to briefly examine so as to shed light on the encounter between Platonism and Christian thought concerns the way in which, in

the context of Christian doctrine of creation, the ontological status of matter and its relationship to form are conceived. In this regard, indications of particular interest emerge from Augustine's interpretation of the first verses of Genesis.

Commenting on the beginning of Scripture, Augustine notes on several occasions that corporeal matter is not only in some way knowable by considering the mutability of bodily creatures, but he also affirms that it coincides with their very mutability: in other words, it constitutes the necessary formless support for the transition from form to form.[49] Prime matter can perform this ontological function because, in so far as it is created by God, it is characterised by a yielding plasticity and an intrinsic aptitude to receive the totality of forms: it is precisely because of these characteristics, indeed, that it is symbolised by the holy writer through the term "water" (Gen 1:2c).[50]

This aspect of Augustine's reflection is extremely relevant, as confirmed by the fact that scholars have thoroughly investigated its relationship with the conception of Plotinus[51] and Porphyry. According to a traditional historiographic hypothesis,[52] the theme of the aptitude of matter towards form could be considered as an indication of a Porphyrian influence: more specifically, Augustine would have known the section of the (for us) lost commentary on the *Timaeus* containing Porphyry's criticism of the cosmological doctrine of the Middle Platonist philosopher Atticus (second century AD).[53] In a nutshell, by opposing the "literal" interpretations of the *Timaeus* that conceived the generation of the cosmos in temporal terms, Porphyry identifies in the suitability of matter to receive order and form (ἐπιτηδειότης πρὸς τὸ κοσμεῖσθαι)[54] an indispensable doctrinal element to avoid, on the one hand, to trigger off an irrational proliferation of principles, and, on the other hand, to admit that God was for a certain time inoperative and limited in the exercise of his cosmopoietic power.[55]

This interpretative hypothesis poses some problems and presents a high degree of uncertainty.[56] First, it has the undeniable merit of showing that Augustine could trace in the Neoplatonic context a version of the doctrine of matter according to which the latter is not characterised as a reality opposite to form, nor conceived of in ontologically and ethically negative terms;[57] similarly, it opportunely highlights a series of important elements of continuity between the Porphyrian conception of the origin of matter and the Christian doctrine of the creatio ex nihilo.[58] By contrast, however, this hypothesis does not offer a complete demonstration of the fact that Augustine actually knew Porphyry's commentary:[59] the terminological parallelism between the locutions ἐπιτηδειότης πρὸς τὸ κοσμεῖσθαι and capacitas formae, surely, cannot be considered as a sufficient indication.

On the doctrinal level, moreover, Augustine's reflection differs considerably from that of Porphyry. When Augustine, in dealing with the genesis of the cosmos, highlights matter's capacity to receive form,[60] his primary intent is not to deny the doctrine of the temporal genesis of the world, but rather to emphasise both the absolute character of God's creative power and the total dependence of matter on it. In this sense, the Augustinian reflection fits perfectly into the broader framework of the doctrine of the creatio ex nihilo, which requires that matter, as it is constituted by an omnipotent God, does not oppose His action and is endowed with a receptive capacity (not to say a real positive orientation) towards form.[61]

The positive connotation that the relationship between matter and form acquires within the doctrine of creation has the important function of excluding the idea that matter represents an antagonistic and limiting principle towards the creative action of God. This particular connotation of matter, in some ways, highlights points of contact with the Stoic conception of matter,[62] more so than with the Platonic or Aristotelian doctrine.[63]

For Augustine, emphasising the capacitas formae of matter ultimately means to reaffirm the ontological positivity of the whole creation in an anti-Manichean perspective: formless matter, in fact, should not be considered as an eternal evil principle, but rather as a created entity, whose positive ontological connotation is based on the capacity to receive forms it was equipped with by God. It is now fully understandable, therefore, why Augustine strives to go back by way of subtraction from the formed realities to the formless matter, showing how in it persists a degree, albeit minimal, of ontological positivity.[64]

Conclusions

As emerged in this chapter, the doctrine of the origin of the cosmos and of prime matter is a field of study particularly suitable for understanding the nature of the encounter between Platonism and Christian thought in Late Antiquity. It is an encounter that, from this particular point of observation, appears irreducible to strict judgements. Commenting on the beginning of Genesis, on the one hand, Christian thinkers oppose a clear and unanimous rejection of the philosophical (and notably Middle-Platonic) doctrine of the eternity of matter. Through a sophisticated argumentative strategy they strive to show that admitting the existence of an ungenerated matter is not only tantamount to limiting the creative power of God, but it also poses serious problems with respect to both the doctrine of divine Providence and the belief in the goodness of the cosmos.

This does not mean, however, that the patristic reflection on matter is not strongly indebted to the philosophical and notably Neoplatonic, conception of matter. The two case studies examined in the second part have proved to be particularly indicative in this regard. The first of them has shown how, by reflecting on the possibility of knowing matter, Christian thinkers resort, to a large extent, to the traditional method of abstraction of forms. This recourse, as we have seen, is characterised not as a simple passive assimilation, but as a functional appropriation finalised, in one case (Origen and Augustine) with the identification of a formless material substratum created by God, and in another (Basil and Gregory) with the denial of an ungenerated support for the constitutive qualities of bodies.

The second case study, finally, has highlighted how the doctrine of the suitability of matter with respect to form can represent a meeting point between the Christian and Neoplatonic conception of matter. This subject, however, acquires a decisive importance in the doctrine of creation out of nothing. It does so by agreeing with the dogma of divine omnipotence and providing decisive support for the ontological positivity of the sensible world.

Notes

1 For the origin of the doctrine of creation out of nothing, see May 1978.
2 The text of Eusebius, *Praeparatio Evangelica* VII.20 is catalogued by Metzler 2010: 63–66 as fragment D 3.
3 Eusebius, *PE* VII.20.1.
4 Köckert 2009: 280.
5 As Origen asserts in his treatise: *Princ*. IV.4.7.
6 Eusebius, *PE* VII.20.2.
7 Eusebius, *PE* VII.20.3, about which should be seen the comment in Köckert 2009: 281–282.
8 Eusebius, *PE* VII.20.4, about which should be seen the comment in Köckert 2009: 282–283.
9 Eusebius, *PE* VII.20.5. As it shines through in Origen's argument, in the perspective of the Christian doctrine of creation out of nothing (and in a way somewhat similar to the later Neoplatonic authors) the foundation of matter is understood in view of a fundamentally theological orientation.
10 Eusebius, *PE* VII.20.6.
11 Eusebius, *PE* VII.20.7.
12 Some traces of the same polemic strategy emerge through the pages of *Princ.* (e.g. II.1.1). Cf. Boys-Stones 2011.
13 For this hypothesis of dating, see the bibliography cited in Köckert 2009: 312, n. 2.
14 Basil, *Hex*. II.2.2.
15 Basil, *Hex*. II.2.4–5.
16 Basil, *Hex*. II.2.6–7.
17 Basil, *Hex*. II.2.8.
18 For the various dating hypothesis, see Henke 2000: 16.
19 Ambrose, *Exam*. I.2.5.
20 See the texts quoted by Pépin 1973: 261–267.
21 Ambrose, *Exam*. I.7.25 (text translated and analysed in Henke 2000: 182–187).
22 Ambrose, *Exam*. II.1.1. Regarding this text, see the remarks of Nauroy 2011.
23 For a complete list of the texts under consideration, see Moro 2017: 48–51.
24 Augustine, *Conf.* XI.5.7. For a more detailed analysis of this text, see Moro 2017: 149–170.
25 Origen, *Princ*. IV.4.7. On this passage, and on the meaning of the reference to the "bastard kind of reasoning" (νόθος λογισμός) in Plato, *Tim*. 52b, see Bostock 1980: 326.
26 Augustine, *Conf.* XII.5.5. Also in this passage, both on the lexical level and on the conceptual one, the influence of the Platonic text of *Tim*. 52b and of its reinterpretations by later Platonic thinkers is evident, particularly Plotinus and Calcidius (4th century). For a more detailed analysis of the question, cf. Moro 2017: 184–198.
27 Augustine, *Civ. Dei* XII.7.
28 Augustine, *Conf.* XII.6.6.
29 Aristotle, *Met*. Z 3, 1029a 10–19.
30 A list of textual and bibliographic references can be found in Moro 2017: 208–209.
31 Basil, *Hex*. I.8.3–4.
32 Cf. Armstrong 1962; Sorabji 1988: 45 (on which we will return later).
33 Cf. Zachhuber 2006; Köckert 2009: 345–347.
34 For an overall analysis of the work, composed in 379 in the aftermath of Basil's death, see Köckert 2009: 400–526.
35 Gregory of Nyssa, *In Hex*. 7 (Drobner).
36 Gregory of Nyssa, *In Hex*. 7 (Drobner). In putting the question, it is plausible that Gregory was influenced by the reflection of the Neoplatonic philosopher Porphyry, preserved for us by the Athenian Neoplatonic philosopher Proclus (412–485); for further details, cf. Sorabji 1988: 55.
37 Gregory of Nyssa, *In Hex*. 7 (Drobner).

38 Gregory of Nyssa, *De hominis opificio* 24; Sorabji 1988: 53. Cf. Gregory of Nyssa, *De anima et resurrectione*, PG 46: 124b–d.
39 Cf. Köckert 2009: 415, which translates precisely ὕλη with "materielle Körperlichkeit."
40 See Sorabji 1988: 54–55.
41 See Marmodoro 2015.
42 The hypothesis goes back to Armstrong 1962, who refers to *Enn*. II.4.11, 1–8.
43 I refer to the chapter of Emilsson in this volume, for a more comprehensive account of matter (and its relation to badness) in Plotinus.
44 For a balanced discussion of the question, cf. Chiaradonna 2016; Emilsson 2017: 203–214.
45 In this regard, see the critical remarks formulated by Köckert 2009: 420–421.
46 This observation was first proposed by Alexandre 1976: 166–169.
47 Origen, *Princ*. IV.4.7.
48 I summarise here the reading of Köckert 2009: 421–424.
49 Cf. e.g. Augustine, *Conf.* XII.6.6; 8.8; 17.25; 19.28; *Civ. Dei* XXII.19.
50 Cf. e.g. Augustine, *Conf.* XII.15.19; 17.25–26; 22.31.
51 On the fundamental difference between Plotinus' and Augustine's conception of matter on this point, see Moro 2018.
52 See Theiler 1933: 13–14.
53 The section of Porphyry's commentary is handed down to us by Proclus, *In Tim.* I, 391.4–396.26 (= fr. 51, ed. Sodano), on the content of which see Baltes 1976: 221.
54 This expression appears in Proclus, *In Tim*. I, 392.8. On the use of the concept of ἐπιτηδειότης in and before Porphyry, cf. Pavlos 2017.
55 On this point, see the analysis of Rescigno 1997.
56 This has been convincingly shown by Du Roy 1966, who considers it unnecessary to hypothesise a Porphyrian direct influence with respect to the theme of the *capacitas formae*.
57 As is frequently the case in Plotinus (e.g. *Enn*. I.6.2, II.4.5, II.5.5, III.6.13, I.8.3, 8) and, moreover, in Porphyry himself (e.g. *Sent*. 20; 30; *De abst*. III.27).
58 On Porphyry's conception of the origin of matter, see: Aeneas of Gaza, *Theophrastus* 175.2–9 (= fr. 368F. Smith); John Lydus, *De mensibus* 175.2–9; Simplicius, *In Aristotelis Physicorum libros quattuor priores commentaria*, 230.34–231.24 (= fr. 236F. Smith). For a careful discussion of these texts, see Tornau 2000.
59 Theoretically, it is possible that Augustine became aware of some aspects of Porphyry's reflection via Calcidius: cf. Bakhouche and Brisson 2011: 47–53.
60 For a complete list of textual references, cf. Moro 2017: 137–138.
61 See Philo of Alexandria, *De opificio mundi* VI.23; *De providentia* II.50–51; Eusebius, *PE* VII.20–21. Among patristic thinkers, it is Origen, above all, who strongly emphasises the complete "availability" with regard to the divine action which matter possesses precisely because created by God: see *Princ*. II.4.1; III.6.4; III.6.7.
62 Cf. Cicero, *De natura deorum*, III.xxxix.92, and the comment on this text in Brisson 2002: 32.
63 As it has been suggested, instead, by Bouton-Touboulic 2004: 72.
64 For a complete list of textual references, see Moro 2017: 140.

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5 Plotinus' doctrine of badness as matter in *Ennead* I.8 [51][1]

Eyjólfur Kjalar Emilsson

The problem of badness

We may wonder how badness could be identified with matter. We are familiar with moral evils such as cruelty and greed, natural evils such as earthquakes and plagues and social evils such as poverty and drugs, but how could matter, which isn't really anything in and of itself, be bad? Surely, matter isn't any of these familiar evils. We never directly meet with it in our experience: it does not hurt us nor is it the subject of our regrets, worries or sins. Yet, according to Plotinus matter is the root of all of these more familiar evils.

Considered abstractly and from within Plotinus' system it should perhaps not come as a surprise that matter is the ultimate badness: matter is at the bottom, the Good (the One) is at the top of Plotinus' hierarchical picture of reality. So they are the extremes and in Plotinus' system and according to him indeed opposites (*Enn*. I.8.6).[2] Still, it does not go without saying that matter is bad, for as we shall see Proclus, who shared Plotinus' basic philosophical outlook, disagrees. He denies that matter is the opposite of the Good, and that matter is bad.

Before we go into the intricacies of Plotinus' doctrine of matter as badness and the disagreements Proclus has with his view, let us consider the issue in a wider context. What often is called the problem of evil is the puzzle that arises within Christian (Islamic, Judaic, and Persian) theology: if the world is created by a benevolent, omnipotent, wise god, how are we to explain the fact that the world is apparently far from perfect, in fact full of badness? We see versions of this problem in ancient pagan thought. It first presents itself with full force in Stoicism: the Stoics believed that everything that happens is the work of a provident *logos* that the Stoics identified with Zeus. They give two sorts of explanation for the apparently disagreeable features of the world: most of these apparent evils, such as poverty, accidents, illness, and death, aren't really bad at all, even if they may appear so to ignorant and corrupt souls. Secondly, human beings have freedom: because we are endowed with reason it is up to us to make the right choices and develop a good character, which secures happiness. This freedom is one of the providential blessings of Zeus. If we misuse it, we cannot blame Zeus and must blame ourselves.[3] As far as I can tell, the Christian answers to the problem are mostly variants of these two Stoic answers. The freely chosen turning away from

God that Christians often speak of in connection with Lucifer's fall and the first humans' sin in Eden essentially contains a version of the Stoic second answer.

The Platonists in antiquity face a special problem here because as so often else there is no extended discourse on the nature of badness in Plato. There are, however, several significant passages and remarks in Plato that subsequent ancient Platonists would build on.[4] The interpretation of Plato's *Timaeus* naturally plays a central role here. Plato presents his world-maker as a powerful and indeed benevolent craftsman. Nevertheless, the cosmos the divine craftsman makes is only "as excellent and supreme as its nature would allow" (*Tim*. 30b), which indicates that there are some limitations. These limitations were in general identified with the Necessity invoked in *Timaeus* 45a as a partial cause of the cosmos along with the craftsman's intellect and the Forms. Middle Platonists such as Plutarch interpret the *Timaeus* creation story and other Platonic passages in such a way that there is an ungenerated errant soul–by "ungenerated" I mean "not caused by the higher principles"–identified with the Necessity of the *Timaeus* and opposed to the Forms and divine Craftsman;[5] this soul is the cause of errant motions in matter, which also is ungenerated, and stands as an obstacle to the perfection of the Craftsman's work. Even if the divine causes manage to put a pretty good order on this soul and matter, the errant soul remains there nevertheless, having a bad influence on things.[6] In general Plotinus' middle Platonist predecessors believed in an ungenerated realm of Necessity that sets limits to the perfection of the cosmos and is responsible for its shortcomings.

Plotinus' Platonic predecessors were discontented with the Stoic position from a metaphysical point of view: as Numenius' account of matter and badness makes clear, he sees the Stoic position as lacking in that on the one hand the Stoics posit the Logos (Zeus) who is good and on the other matter without qualities and neither good nor bad; since the Logos is good and nothing bad stands in its way, the Stoics lack an explanation of the origin of evil according to Numenius (fr. 52 des Places, 44–50). Thus, in Plutarch and Numenius we find the germs of a routine question: how do you explain badness? This was to become a stock topic that every philosopher had to take a position on.[7] Our treatise, which Porphyry gave the title "What are and whence come evils" exemplifies this: in the first chapter Plotinus lists a number of questions about badness that he wishes to address. One of them is: what is the origin of badness? This is a question that already had been established as a fair, standard question to ask about any philosophy that maintained a powerful, intelligent, and good cause of what there is.

In Plotinus' world there is no ungenerated bad soul or ungenerated matter. So unlike his Platonic predecessors he cannot simply appeal to some preexisting errant soul or chaotic matter to explain the shortcomings of the cosmos. That soul in general is generated from higher principles for Plotinus is uncontested. The question about the status and origin of matter has been disputed, even if the vast majority of scholars today seem to hold that matter too originates from the One. What is disputed is what is the exact origin of matter. Ever since the publication of his "Plotinus on Evil: a Study of Matter and the Soul in Plotinus' Conception of Human Evil" in 1969,[8] Denis O'Brien has been an ardent

advocate of the view that matter is indeed generated and specifically generated by the lowest phase of soul.[9] Despite some dissenting voices, I find his arguments concerning the origin of matter conclusive.[10] In any case, for the purposes of my concerns in this chapter it is not of crucial importance whether matter is the product of the soul or of something else. It is of importance, however, that it is generated with the Good as its ultimate cause.

So how does this problem of badness look from a Plotinian perspective? The cause of all is the One, alias the Good. In what certainly counts as one of Plotinus' philosophically most interesting treatises, "On the voluntary and on the will of the One" (*Enn*. VI.8.), he argues that if we could think or say this first cause, which we admittedly cannot, we would think and say that nothing limits the will of the One. In this sense it can be said to be omnipotent. So we have a situation not that different from the monotheistic one, Christian or otherwise. Everything is caused by an impeccable cause and nothing stands in its way. Nevertheless, we are faced with a host of facts about illness, poverty, pain, distress, and, not least, vice pervading our experience and our region. How are we to explain this? The answer Plotinus gives in our treatise, "What are and whence come evils," says that the ultimate blame lies in the fact of matter.[11] But matter, according to the present account, is generated by the Good. So it would seem that the Good makes something bad, which is puzzling. I will have to say more on that issue later. It does not help that the culprit, matter, is described as something passive and inert, lacking being, in fact. How could something like that be the cause of anything?

Proclus' objections

More than a century after Plotinus' death, Proclus forcefully attacked Plotinus' notion of badness in *De malorum subsistentia*, advancing objections of the sort I just adumbrated and more.[12] For some unknown reason, he, however, nowhere mentions Plotinus by name but there cannot be any doubt that it is the latter's doctrine he is attacking.[13] Proclus presents several criticisms but I shall limit my discussion to the three that I find sharpest: (1) It does not follow from the fact that matter has no share in the Good, is in fact void of form, goodness, and being (a view of matter Proclus shares with Plotinus), that it is bad: not good, does not mean bad.[14] (2) If matter is caused by the Good and matter is badness as Plotinus holds, the Good, being the cause of what is bad, is itself bad. Proclus is quick to point out that this is a totally unacceptable view. (It even follows, according to Proclus, that badness must be good on Plotinus' view but I shall not pursue this additional objection because I think it is either sophistical or based on an obvious misunderstanding.[15]) There is a third problem also addressed by Proclus that I wish to take up: (3) Plotinus suggests that matter is somehow the cause of badness in other things: illness, poverty, and vice in souls; at the same time he holds that matter is totally inert; given that matter is without qualities and inert it may seem that it cannot be the cause of anything.

Proclus agrees with Plotinus on many of the essentials of the case: matter has the Good as its ultimate cause and he agrees with the description of it as

"indefinite," "void of form," "lacking in being" and so forth. But he denies that it is bad. In Proclus' view matter considered in itself is neither good nor bad (in that way he is resuming the Stoic position): surely it is not good since it lacks in any form and is in a sense nothing; but it is necessary for the composition of the cosmos and it is good that the cosmos exists; in that sense it is good.

Opsomer thinks that Proclus is just right in his criticisms: from the fact that something is utterly lacking in goodness, it cannot be inferred that it is evil: "not good" does not mean "evil," because being evil is a definite characteristic, implying the ability to do nasty things. Absence, however, does not cause anything, nothing can participate in it or "possess" it.[16] Evil, on the contrary, is a characteristic in its own right, and if matter is evil, that which produces it must be evil too, under the application of the axiom that the character of the effect is eminently in the cause. But if matter is completely inert and without quality–if it lacks measure as well as other nice things–there is no reason why we should call it evil. If it has no qualities, it can have no bad qualities. If it does not do anything, it cannot do anything wrong.[17] We see here all three objections that were listed above crystallised in a sequence of closely connected thoughts. Proclus and Opsomer try to force a dilemma on Plotinus: he has to choose between having the Good produce bad properties that essentially pertain to matter (with absurd consequences) and admitting that matter has no properties that enable it to accomplish anything, hence no bad properties, hence there is no reason to call it bad or badness. In what follows I shall attempt to explain the main points of Plotinus' theory of badness in *Enn*. I.8. and at the same time address and respond to the objections recounted above.

Does "not good" imply "bad"?

There are everyday cases where it indeed seems plausible to deny that "evil" or even "bad" follows from "not good." Consider a person about whom we say that he isn't a good person at all, morally speaking–there is nothing in him that is particularly morally praiseworthy–but he isn't really bad either, at least not bad in the sense of "evil." We might rather say that this person is harmless, not evil but not good either. So, here evil or even bad, does not necessarily follow from "not good." In other cases, however, "bad" seems to follow from "not good." Think of a mechanic who is no good at all at the tasks of a mechanic. He has none of the virtues we associate with good mechanics: no good at finding out what is wrong with the car, works slowly and does a lousy job in addition. This is a paradigmatically bad mechanic.

At this stage somebody might point out that there are of course mechanics that are just average: not really good but not terribly bad either. Does not this show that even in the case of goodness *as*, goodness after its kind, "bad" does not follow from "not good"?[18] I would respond by noting that if our average mechanic is utterly lacking in one of the properties that characterise a good mechanic, he is bad in that aspect of his trade but makes up for it by possessing other, good-making properties. Or he may possess a mechanic virtue to less than an ideal

degree: he effectively identifies the problem with the car in, say, 80% of cases but does badly in 20%. He is a good mechanic to the extent he is successful. To the extent he fails where a good mechanic would succeed he is a bad mechanic. It is tempting to generalise: when we are dealing with goodness after its kind, being good *as* something, lack of the properties in virtue of which the being in question is good after its kind makes it bad or poor *as that sort of thing*.[19]

As already noted, in the first chapter of "On what are and whence come evils" Plotinus raises several questions about badness: where does it come from? What is it? How do we know it? Knowledge is knowledge of forms, he notes, but whatever badness is it cannot be a form. How can it then be known? He suggests that since opposites are known by the same knowledge and bad is the opposite of good, we may learn about the nature of badness by first considering goodness. This he proceeds to do in the second chapter. Here he surveys the intelligible realm, the realm of true being and what is beyond being, i.e. the Good, Intellect and Soul, and he finds no fault with it. This goes of course without saying for the Good itself, which he accounts for as "that on which everything depends" and "to which everything aspires" (*Enn*. I.8.2, 2–3).[20] It is "without need, sufficient to itself, lacking nothing, the measure and bond of all things, giving from itself intellect and real being and soul and life and intellectual activity" (*Enn*. I.8.2, 2–6). He notes that what comes immediately after the Good, i.e. Intellect and Soul, the levels of true being, also enjoys self-sufficiency, unity, and wholeness. Intellect and Soul enjoy self-sufficiency in the sense that they are fully what it is to be for them, i.e. in Aristotelian terms in their case essence and the thing are identical. Intellect, however, of course, depends on the Good and Soul on Intellect. This is the reason why Intellect and Soul constitute the realm of being in the full and true sense (the Good, as is well known, is even beyond true being).[21] The intelligible realm is faultless, every item in it has the good-making properties among which he stresses self-sufficiency the most.

The bad is something that lacks the good-making features Plotinus identified in the intelligible realm. He concludes that badness must be the very opposite of these features, "a kind of unmeasuredness in relation to measure, and unboundedness in relation to limit, and formlessness in relation to *logos*, and perpetual neediness in relation to what is self-sufficient: always undefined, nowhere stable, subject to every sort of influence, insatiate, complete poverty: all this is not accidental to it but in a sort of way its essence" (*Enn*. I.8.3, 13–17). These characteristics, which are mostly indicated by words beginning with a privative alpha, indicating lack, are the opposites of the features of the intelligible realm in virtue of which its members are good. Thus, the general bad-making features are in Plotinus' view ἀμετρία, ἄπειρία, ἀνείδεον, ἀόριστον and in addition ἐνδεὲς and πενία παντελής.

Plotinus' reasoning here resembles our way of identifying the good and the bad mechanics. We knew what to expect from a good mechanic and we identified the bad one by noting what he lacked of the characteristics in virtue of which we count the good mechanic as a good one. Plotinus' train of thought in identifying the bad is in relevant respects just the same. He reasons: we know the good; let us consider its characteristics; then we also know what the bad is like. We might think that there

is a crucial difference, however, between the good and the bad mechanic, on the one hand, and the good and the bad in Plotinus' world, on the other: as opposed to the case of the mechanic, it is not obvious what the Good or Intellect are supposed by good *as*, and by similar reasoning, not obvious what the bad is bad *as*. Surely, the Good is not good as a first principle as opposed to a poor first principle, and in calling Intellect good Plotinus does not mean that Intellect is doing extremely well as an intellect or that what is bad is doing poorly as an intellect. His discourse here is at a much more general level. He is basically claiming that the features he identifies as good are the features in virtue of which anything whatsoever is good. The word "good" here is synonymous with "perfect,": the good is that which is faultless, that which in no way is lacking with regard to being whatever it is. Thus, if we ask as what sort of thing the things he says are good are good, the answer will be entirely general: he has in mind properties that are good-making for anything. They are good as beings one might be tempted to say. That answer may, however, not be quite general enough. True enough that perfection, completeness, and self-sufficiency are good-making properties for beings but the Good is beyond being. Hence, the good-making properties do not render it good as a being. There is probably nothing we can specify that the Good itself is good as, it is Perfection itself.

However it may be with the Good itself, I contend that the main thrust of Plotinus' argument is relevantly analogous to the case of the mechanic: just as we identified the bad mechanic by noting the lack of good-making features for mechanics Plotinus identifies bad beings by noting the lack of good-making features for beings or indeed for that which is beyond being. Beings characterised by the *alpha privativa* are poor beings, bad at being, to the extent they are so characterised. Thus, if I am right about the kind of reasoning Plotinus is engaged in the second and first half of the third chapter of his treatise on badness, contrary to what Proclus and Opsomer claim, "bad" indeed follows from "not good."

The badness Plotinus has identified is not a characteristic in its own right; it is just the lack of the positive characteristics that make beings good beings. It is true that Plotinus goes on to claim this badness is matter and that this is responsible for the badness of bodies and souls. The question how something without qualities can be responsible for anything, which also puzzles Proclus and Opsomer, remains of course to be addressed. I shall come to it shortly.

When Plotinus reaches his conclusion about the nature of badness quoted above, he has not yet identified the bad with matter. This comes first at the end of the third chapter. Building up for that identification, he makes an interesting but questionable move:

> For if badness occurs accidentally in something else, it must be something itself first, even if it is not a substance. Just as there is absolute good and good as a quality, so there must be absolute badness and the badness derived from it which inheres in something else.[22]

In other words, Plotinus is claiming that since there are things–actually the things in the sensible sphere–that are partly characterised by badness as it has been

defined, badness must also exist in itself. As O'Meara notes,[23] Plotinus' argument for this claim about the existence of undiluted badness that comes in the following lines is unconvincing. He, however, does not need this argument in order to maintain the existence of such pure badness: he is already and on more or less independent grounds committed to the existence of matter; matter as he conceives of it is essentially characterised by all the negative determinations he has found to define badness. Hence, the identification of badness itself with matter is a natural move. If we allow Plotinus that move, we have to grant him the existence of undiluted badness.

The very notion of undiluted badness, which is responsible for other, accidental badness is, however, of crucial importance for Plotinus theory of badness. The reasoning I have been attributing to him can be summarised as follows: what is bad is what fails to have the properties that make something good beings, and this turns out to be the same as what makes things poor beings. With the identification of badness with matter he is saying in addition that there is a level below that of poor beings, so to say, a level so low that we cannot speak of being at all in its case. Analogously we might say of a person that he is so hopeless in things mechanical that he is no mechanic at all. Moreover, he holds that this base level of undiluted badness is responsible for whatever else is bad.

Matter/badness as cause of badness of bodies

Is matter reasonably said to be bad? Opsomer argues that evil (badness) is as a matter of fact a characteristic in its own right, whereas Plotinian matter, being qualityless, inert, pure privation or absence, cannot be bad and, hence, cannot be a cause of anything. He puts the case thus:

> But if matter is completely inert and qualityless–if it lacks measure as well as other nice things–there is no reason why one should call it evil. If it has no qualities, it can have no bad qualities. If it does not do anything, it cannot do anything wrong.[24]

Schäfer comes close to agreeing as he admits that in itself matter is not evil but only evil in its effects.[25] Opsomer offers a thought experiment to prove his point: imagine *per impossibile* that there was just matter: wouldn't it be totally absurd to hold that there is anything bad there? Matter would just be there, not harming anyone.[26] But is it totally absurd to hold that matter, even if it alone existed, is bad? If we keep in mind the sense of bad as bad being that I have argued for, it is not absurd at all to hold that matter is bad in itself. It is true that matter is not an exceptionally poor being. It is below that because it is below being anything at all. To bring in our mechanic, once again, for comparison: a person who has none of the skills and other virtues that characterise a mechanic is not a bad mechanic but no mechanic at all. Still we can agree that such a person represents everything we associate with badness in a mechanic: he is such a bad mechanic that he is really no mechanic, we might be tempted to say. By parallel reasoning, matter is not

just a poor being, but no being at all, below that in terms of badness. The appeal of Opsomer's thought experiment lies in the fact we may be liable to believe that good or bad must in every case be good or bad for someone or something. The goodness and badness at stake here is, however, not of that kind, even if it is true that Plotinus will argue that matter/badness is bad for other things or at least responsible for badness in other things. Yet, even if it is no accident that what is bad in the sense in which matter is bad has bad effects on living bodies and souls, its identification as badness has nothing directly to do with its being bad for someone or something.

It remains to see, however, how matter, being essentially shortage and without any positive attributes, can have any effect on anything, and in particular how it can be the cause of anything bad. Plotinus does not use these exact phrases, "the cause of badness" or "the principle of badness" but his account leaves no doubt that he thinks matter is to blame for what is bad elsewhere, at least in the sense that were it not for matter everything would be faultless. The claim that matter is the cause of something may seem like a strange and implausible claim in light of all the negative characteristics of matter, which is said to be without qualities and, in fact, inert.

My short answer is that matter may be the explanation why certain things are such as they are without being the active cause of anything. As a first step towards explaining this let me briefly summarise the situation with regard to the notion of "bad for something or somebody." In our treatise only two sorts of things are mentioned as possible candidates of having something that is bad for them and of becoming bad: living bodies and souls. In another treatise, "On the primal good and other goods," which is Plotinus' very last one (number 54 on Porphyry's chronological list) and thus chronologically close to our treatise, he is quite explicit that nothing bad can happen to lifeless things like a stone (*Enn*. I.7.3, 6–8). Yet, the root of badness for living bodies lies in bodily nature as such, which in turn is explained by matter. Plotinus tells us why in chapter 4 of our treatise: Here he says:

> The nature of bodies, in so far as it participates in matter, will be bad but not the primary badness. For bodies have a sort of form, which is not true form, and they are deprived of life, and in their disorderly motion they destroy each other, they hinder the soul in its proper activity, and they evade substantiality in their continual flow, being a secondary evil.[27]

Matter seems to be claimed to be responsible for three bad effects here: (a) The falsity of the forms of bodies that appear in it; (b) the volatile and destructive nature of bodies, and through (b) for (c) hindering the soul in its proper activity. I shall discuss these alleged culpabilities of matter in turn. In order to fully appreciate how matter is responsible for (a) and (b) in Plotinus' view, it is necessary to address his conception of the relationship between matter, body, and spatiality.[28]

The explanation comes in three steps. (1) In the treatise "On matter" (*Enn*. II.4. [12]), an early treatise, Plotinus has a hypothetical opponent ask rhetorically: "If

[matter] is without magnitude, what would it contribute, if it contributes neither to form and quality nor to extension and magnitude, which appears, wherever it occurs, to come to bodies from their matter (. . .). So this sizelessness of matter is an empty name." (*Enn*. II.4.11, 4–13) He proceeds to respond to this charge. While the details of his account remain somewhat obscure, the following points are reasonably clear: matter itself is without magnitude and extension. Magnitude and extension generally belong to the realm of forms and come to matter through the agency of the rational formulas (*logoi*) that belong to the lowest face of soul, nature (*physis*) (cf. *Enn*. III.6.18). Nor is matter to be confused with bulk (*onkos*): "[matter] receives the rest of its qualities at the same time as it becomes a bulk" (*Enn*. II.4.11, 26–27).[29] It is, however, easily confused with bulk because the soul, trying to imagine matter, is at a loss and ends up with a picture of a bulk (*Enn*. II.4.11).

Nevertheless, there is a special relation between matter, on the one hand, and spatial extension. "Bulk" (*onkos*), "magnitude" (*megethos*), and "extension" (*diastēma*) go together in Plotinus; they are the defining characteristics of bodies and all mean or imply spatial extension.[30] He says that matter's first capacity, so to speak, is the capacity for bulk and further that matter "receives the forms of bodies in magnitude," meaning, I take it, that the forms of bodies are expanded and come in determinate spatial magnitudes. Furthermore, in the same context he notes that "matter receives what it receives in extension because it is itself receptive of extension." (*Enn*. II.4.11, 17–19). Apparently, even if matter receives extension at the same time as it receives other forms, colors, for instance, its reception of extension is somehow more basic. How is it so?

(2) The following answer lacks direct textual basis (see however *Enn*. III.6.17, 12) but it strikes me as plausible and in line with Plotinus' general way of thinking. As we have seen, one of the characteristics of matter is indefiniteness. Indefiniteness is the final stage of differentiation, the ultimate plurality that contrasts with the Good's unity. Indefiniteness is even "beyond" or rather "below" being many: that is why Plotinus can say that matter becomes many by receiving every form (*Enn*. II.4.11, 42). Though being below the determination and plurality of extension, matter is still a principle of plurality. Its indefiniteness is the reason why corporeal forms are expanded. Spatial extension, which is the most differentiated stage in the ontology with the exception of matter itself, is the result of the meeting of the absolute indefiniteness of matter and the definiteness of form: when forms, which prior to this are unextended intelligible entities, are reflected on matter, they are reflected as spatially expanded. Together with spatial expanse comes spatial separation and individuation. It is a characteristic of magnitudes and bulks, i.e. bodies, that each body (and each part of a body) is its own expanse from which other bodies are excluded.[31] Spatial expanse and the separation that comes along with it is, as it were, a compromise between total indefiniteness and the "all-together" mode of being of intelligibles.

(3) This discussion started with an objector's claim that matter as Plotinus conceives of it contributes nothing and, hence, can be dispensed with. Plotinus' response is that matter is responsible for extension and the extended character

of corporeal forms and thus contributes a lot (*Enn*. II.4.12, 1–7). The question arises whether the account doesn't attribute a causal role to matter. The question is tricky: indeed, forms that are in themselves without magnitude come to have spatial magnitude on account of matter. Thus, matter clearly plays a role in an explanation of why things in the sensible world are such as they are. Still, Plotinus would not admit that matter is playing an active causal role in this: it does not change the form that enters into it. Rather, it is the powerlessness of matter to receive that explains why the forms in it appear in extension: this is the best matter can do with respect to receiving form.[32]

Even if matter is thus responsible for extension without being an active cause of it, it is not yet obvious how it is responsible for badness. What is wrong with extension? The answer is that it is not just extension as such but Plotinus' particular conception of it that it is the reason for badness. Bodies are individual in the sense that each of them is separate from any other body; a body is an extended bulk which is, so to say, entirely its own: two different bodies cannot occupy the same spatial expanse. The same holds also for distinct spatial parts of a single body. Thus, with spatial expanse comes separation, isolation, and conflict: each body is on its own occupying the place it does with the qualities it has. The qualities it has, including its spatial properties, are reflections in matter, which matter, however, cannot appropriate and hence remains unaffected by them. A consequence of this scenario is that the qualities of bodies sit lightly, constantly susceptible to impact and destruction from contrary qualities of other, neighbouring bodies.[33]

In the treatise "On providence" (*Enn*. III.2. [47]) Plotinus contrasts the intelligible and the sensible realms as follows:

> The nature of Intellect and being is the true and first universe, which does not stand apart from itself and is not weakened by division and is not incomplete even in its parts, since each part is not cut off from the whole; but the whole intellect lives and thinks all together in one, and makes the part the whole and all bound in friendship with itself, since one part is not separated from another and has not become merely other, estranged from the rest; and therefore, one does not wrong another, even if they are opposites.[34]

This passage is revealing not only about Plotinus' view on the relationships in the intelligible realm but also about the sensible one. He implies that in the sensible realm there is separation, becoming other, and estrangement in comparison with the situation in the higher realm. These characteristics of the sensible realm are due to the isolation and estrangement of things doomed to spatial existence, which in turn is due to matter's incapacity to receive forms properly.

Even if bodies are vulnerable, constantly under threat of being changed and ruined by other bodies, as already noted Plotinus seems not to suppose that something can be bad *for* lifeless bodies. Lifeless bodies may be bad, are even intrinsically bad because necessarily involving matter, but nothing is bad for them any more than anything is bad for matter itself. The constant struggle and

volatility of bodies is, however, the source of badness for living bodies. Plotinus says about this:

> But if one supposes that also things outside the soul can be bad, illness or poverty for instance, how will one trace them back to the nature of matter? Illness is defect and excess of material bodies (*sōmatōn enulōn*) that do not keep order and measure; ugliness is matter not mastered by form; poverty is lack and deprivation of things we need because of the matter with which we are coupled, whose very nature is to be in need.[35]

Thus, the fact that living bodies have continually to be replenished and are vulnerable to the impact of other bodies explains common bodily evils. Both the need for replenishment and the vulnerability are due to the unstable nature of bodies and the fact that they have to compete about their place. We have seen that this is ultimately due to the nature of matter. It is of course true that the motions of bodies are ultimately caused by the lowest phase of soul and its rational formulas. We may therefore wonder why Plotinus does not consider soul as at least a partial cause of bodily evils. For whatever reason he does not seem to be concerned about this in our treatise.[36]

Matter/badness as the cause of badness of souls

There are ills not only for living bodies but also for and in souls. There are two main discussions in our treatise of the ills of soul: in chapters 4–5 and towards the end of the treatise in chapter 14 Plotinus resumes the topic in responding to an objection to his account. In the former discussion he distinguishes between a type of soul, the non-rational soul, that is immersed with body and, hence, with matter, and the rational soul, which may or may not be infected by the body and matter. The former is the lower kind of soul that operates through the body and is preoccupied with the sensible realm.[37] This embodied soul, which comprises several faculties, is in charge of various biological functions, such as growth, nourishing, sense-perception. To it also belong feelings, desires, aversions, and opinions (*doxai*) that arise from the relationship with the body. Plotinus speaks of the lower soul being mixed with body and matter, thereby becoming bad (*Enn*. I.8.4, 6–12).

As opposed to the lower non-rational soul, the rational soul, which Plotinus sometimes refers to as "our soul,"[38] need not be immersed with the body and matter. It may, however, become contaminated (*Enn*. I.8.4, 15–32), and as I shall argue, this is presumably its default condition at the birth of the organism. This corruption of the rational soul is described metaphorically as the darkening of the soul's vision as she directs its gaze towards matter and becoming. Merely by looking towards matter the rational soul internalises something of unruly nature. In the final discussion of this topic in chapter 14, still highly metaphorical, he explains somewhat more fully how he conceives of this:

> This is the fall of the soul, to come this way to matter and to become weak, because all its powers do not come into action; matter hinders them from

> coming by occupying the place which soul holds and producing a kind of cramped[39] condition, and making bad what it has got hold of by a sort of theft – until the soul manages to escape back to its higher state.[40]

Thus, embodiment implies that the rational soul fails to actualise its higher powers. It is hindered and indeed "cramped" in the sense that the body and the lower soul never leave it at peace with the result that the rational power of the soul becomes preoccupied with the bodily life and does not find the resources to elevate itself above this realm.

There are, as I see it, three main questions that arise concerning this account. (1) Is Plotinus' standard view that the soul cannot be affected by anything below it compromised in our treatise? (2) What is the causal role of matter here? Is it such as to compromise Plotinus' view of matter as inert? (3) Does Plotinus succeed in giving an account that makes matter the sole root of all that is bad? Is it possible that something about the soul that is not due to matter is also responsible?

(1) In other, earlier treatises Plotinus seems to deny that the soul, including the lower soul, is affected by its dealings with the body. This is very strongly emphasised in the first part of the treatise "On the inaffectability of the bodiless" (*Enn*. III.6.1–5. [26]) but this view is also dominant in, for instance, the long treatise on the soul "On the problems of soul" (*Enn*. IV.3.–5. [27–29]).[41] In our treatise, however, he speaks of the lower soul as becoming bad because of the communion with body and through it with matter. He even speaks of matter as infecting (or filling: *anapimplanai*) the soul with its badness as the soul gazes into it (*Enn*. I.8.5, 22). Furthermore, as already noted, he here talks about the lower soul as being mixed with body and matter, whereas on the standard view there is not real mixture of soul and body. So the question arises: does Plotinus here go back on his previous view that the soul is not affected from below?

I do not think he necessarily does. Also in *Ennead* III.6., which so strongly claims the soul to be unaffected by anything bodily, Plotinus readily admits that there is a sense in which the soul is indeed affected by what it looks at. In this treatise, after having forcefully argued in the previous chapters that the soul is unaffected, he asks at the beginning of chapter 5: "Why, then, ought we to seek to make the soul free from affection (*apathē . . . poiein*), when it is not affected to begin with (*mēde tēn archēn paschousan*)"? What is at stake here is a certain ambiguity of the term affection (*pathos*) and its cognates: as Fleet explains,[42] there is on the one hand an ontological sense of being affected (which does not happen to the soul) and on the other an ethical sense, in which does happen to it to be affected. The latter, however, does not change the soul's substance. It is in the former, ontological sense that Plotinus in III.6. and elsewhere insists that the soul cannot be affected. The talk of mixture need not be taken literally. Rather, by this Plotinus wishes to indicate that the lower soul's powers are actualised in and through the body.

Let us then turn to (2) above, the question about the causal role of matter for the badness of souls. There is an interesting and highly relevant passage in chapter 8 of our treatise. Here Plotinus is considering an objection to his view claiming that

even if one admitted that bodily nature was responsible for human ills, it would not follow that matter is responsible. The objector says:

> Even supposing that their [the ills'] coming into existence is caused by the badness of body, it is not matter but the form that causes them, heat, cold, bitter, salt and all the forms of flavor, and also fillings and emptyings, and not just fillings, but fillings with bodies of a particular quality; and in general it is the qualified thing which produces the distinction of desires, and, if you like, of falsified opinions, so that form rather than matter is bad (. . .).[43]

Thus, according to the hypothetical objector it is the body, more specifically the qualities inherent in the body, that are the reason for the ills of the soul; these qualities belong to the realm of form rather than matter, which does not play any role. Plotinus responds that the objector "will, nevertheless, be compelled to admit that badness is matter" (*Enn*. I.8.8, 10–11). For this he gives several reasons, which, however, all boil down to the claim that the forms in matter are impure, their impurity is due to matter, and without it these forms would not do any of the bad things they are said to do here in the sensible realm: "Fire itself [intelligible fire] does not burn" (*Enn*. I.8.8, 16). He goes on to explain that "matter masters what is imagined in it and corrupts and destroys it by applying its own nature, which is contrary to form, not bringing cold to hot but putting shapelessness to shape and its excess and deficiency to what is measured, till it has made the form belong to matter and no longer to itself" (*Enn*. I.8.8, 18–24). The main idea is that whatever bad bodies or their qualities may do, this is due to the corruption they have undergone by matter. As explained in the previous section, this corruption is not due to some active agency on the part of matter but its incapacity to receive the forms properly. So matter is indeed the underlying reason for the ills but it is not as such an active cause of them.

Yet, the trouble matter makes for souls, which may lead to their becoming bad, is entirely through bodies, which the soul has to deal with directly. That is to say: embodied souls have to tackle the instable body that is theirs and because of it the various hazards of the sensible realm, involving other bodies. This realm, as we have seen, is such as it is, i.e. poor at being, bad, because of matter, which is the source of its badness. It is significant that Plotinus invokes the concept of becoming (*genesis*) to describe the lot of the embodied souls: their reasoning part is prevented from seeing by its "looking not towards being but towards becoming whose principle is the nature of matter."[44] "Becoming" (*genesis*) is here equivalent to "non-being" in the sense expounded in chapter 2 of the treatise. In his final verdict in our treatise on the question in what the embodied soul's incapacity consists (cited more fully above on pp. 88–89), he emphasises that the soul in this situation is cramped: "matter hinders [the souls] from coming by occupying the place which soul holds and producing a kind of cramped condition."[45] The result is that the soul becomes preoccupied with the body and the sensible realm so that it fails to attend to itself and what is above it.

The metaphor of being cramped and the suggestion of being hindered from doing what one should do describe exactly the situation of the soul as Plotinus

sees it. What he has in mind is not that the body or matter literally act upon the soul. The situation is rather comparable with that of a brilliant scientist, who finds little if any time to pursue her scientific ideas: she is a single mother without a permanent job; she has to do extra tutoring to make ends meet and much of her time at the academic institution where she is employed goes into clerical work unrelated to her main interests. She is clearly cramped. Over time she may become accustomed to this and lose sight of the ideals and ambitions she once had. She may even settle in her new life of a busy-body with petty tasks and take pleasure from them. She is still cramped, Plotinus would say, given her potential. It is not the case, however, that the tasks she is confronted with have of themselves done anything to her; this is just the situation she finds herself in. In his view, the soul is in a similar situation: neither matter nor the body has changed her essentially–she still has the same capacities–but they lie idle because the soul has become preoccupied with becoming and thereby become bad.

The third question to be addressed is whether Plotinus' claim that all badness is rooted in matter is credible, even in light of his own general premises. One, and presumably the main, reason for suspecting that not all the blame can be put on matter is the fact that he believes that some souls are uninfected by embodiment. This fact immediately raises the question: what is wrong with the souls who are infected, if they remain in their cramped condition? If some souls escape, others not, there is presumably something wrong with the former, and what is wrong with them is not due to matter as such, it may be claimed. And if we conclude that there is something wrong with the souls that let themselves become infected, must we not conclude that these souls are in some way bad?

There are two ways of conceiving of the situation the souls find themselves in: one way is to suppose that the souls enter the body uninfected; some stay that way, others, most presumably, turn their gaze upon nonbeing and become infected by it. The other way is to suppose that by becoming embodied all souls are to some degree infected, but a few manage to escape from this predicament. Though the text does not make this absolutely clear, it strikes me that Plotinus is presuming the latter in I.8. In describing the situation in chapter 14 he talks as if the state of being infected is the default state of the embodied soul: it holds "until the soul manages to lift itself back to the heights" (*Enn*. I.8.14, 49). In "What is the living being and what is Man?" (*Enn*. I.1. [53]), which is chronologically close to our treatise, Plotinus notes that "[W]hile we are children the powers of the compound [i.e. the powers of the lower soul, which necessarily are contaminated by matter] are active, and only a few gleams come to it from what is above" (*Enn*. I.1.11, 1–2). This suggests that human beings are, so to say, infected by badness as soon as they are born in the body and that their rational faculty is mostly directed at the body and the sensible realm. It is true that in chapter 4 of I.8. he speaks about pure souls whose gaze is always directed towards the intellect. This, however, need not be taken to mean that some human souls have always been pure–even sages were children and needed to escape. Most likely by "the pure soul" he has in mind here the star souls or disembodied soul, which always direct their gaze to the intellect. This means, in turn, that the question is

not so much how some souls remain pure as how some souls manage to escape their impure state while others do not.

In chapter 5 of our treatise Plotinus makes an important distinction, relevant to the present issue. He is responding to an objection claiming that the soul's badness lies in its impaired vision. In this context he introduces a distinction between badness and deficiency: "Badness is not in any sort of deficiency but in absolute deficiency; a thing which is only slightly deficient in good is not evil, for it can even be perfect at the level of its own nature" (*Enn*. I.8.5, 5–8). Plotinus is suggesting here that there are deficient souls, lacking good to some extent, but not thereby to be stamped as bad.

Would this do the trick? Deficient souls, which are not as such bad in themselves, become infected by matter and, thereby, become bad. This would indeed formally solve the problem: badness of souls is all due to matter but only souls that are deficient (but not thereby bad) are liable to suffer the badness coming from matter. Still, this solution seems unsatisfactory. At least, if Plotinus wishes, as he indeed seems to do, to provide an account of badness that radically differs from, e.g. Stoic theories, which place the root of badness in false judgment, i.e. in some sort of failure in souls, this response seems altogether too easy and not to address the heart of the problem. Various objections and questions can be raised: is not the so-called deficient soul just the one who is liable to make the wrong judgments? Why, really, not admit that this soul is in a sense bad? To call them "deficient" instead of "bad" may look like a mere verbal manoeuver.

Plotinus may be able to respond to these critical remarks. We need not in this context worry too much about what exactly constitutes a soul's being deficient. It is safe to assume that those souls that become embodied on earth are prior to embodiment more deficient than those of the stars or disembodied souls. Considered in themselves, i.e. prior to or disregarding their embodiment, they, however, need not be involved in anything bad such as false judgments or even liable to such behavior: in this state they are not cramped by matter.

What explanation could Plotinus give of the fact that some souls manage to free themselves while others remain in the mud? There is in principle nothing in the way for some souls being more "cramped" than others. Indeed, Plotinus suggests that himself: "And the passions are stronger because of corresponding mixture of bodies, and some people's passions are stronger than others" (see *Enn*. I.8.30–31). Along the lines suggested above, this is not to be understood so as the body really affects the rational souls, some more than others, but because of it and ultimately because of matter the unfreed rational souls are constantly being bugged by the body, some more than others, to the effect that the souls become preoccupied with this and fail to see the alternative of turning towards themselves and what is above.

The good the cause of badness?

Matter is badness and matter is generated by soul, soul by Intellect and Intellect by the Good; hence, matter is ultimately the product of the Good; hence, the Good

is the cause of badness, which is unacceptable if not self-contradictory: either the Good isn't really the Good or the so-called "badness" it causes isn't a real badness. So argues Proclus followed by Opsomer (2007).

First, I shall present a short and concise version of what I think would be Plotinus' response to this charge for afterwards to explore it more in detail. Even if it is true that the Good is the ultimate cause of matter and even if it is in general true that causation consists in the causes producing images of themselves, it is equally true and inbuilt into the system that the image is an imperfect likeness and always less unified, hence, inferior to its cause. Since this is so, it follows that there are stages where the resemblance to the Good is reduced. Given that there is a final number of stages of unity/plurality and that the production comes in jumps corresponding to these stages, it also follows that there is a last stage where there is no resemblance. This account assumes that every stage at which there is a resemblance produces. Matter is indeed exactly the stage where there is no longer any resemblance. This is because, as Plotinus repeatedly says, matter has no form, no being, no goodness. In formulaic Plotinian terms this means that matter is just indefiniteness, in no way a unity. And if in no way a unity, it is in no way good either.

Why should there be a stage in the series of productions starting from the Good where there is no longer any resemblance to the Good? Could there not be an infinite series in which each item is less good than its predecessor but still has a vestige of goodness? Yes, that is logically possible. But, as already noted, Plotinus (and the other Neoplatonists) were convinced for reasons perhaps never fully explained that the stages of the hierarchy come discrete degrees of unity and that the number of stages is finite. As Plotinus says:

> One can grasp the necessity of badness in this way too. Since there is not only the Good, but by the fact of outgoing beyond it – or if one prefers to put it like this, by the incessant descent and distancing – there must be the last after which nothing further can be generated, and this is badness. Now, it is necessary that what comes after the First should exist, and therefore that the last should exist; and this is matter, which possesses nothing at all of the good. This is the necessity of badness.[46]

We may note, incidentally, that this passage is additional evidence that matter is a product of the Good, its last product. Someone may retort: even if there must be a last stage in the procession from the One, it still does not follow that this stage is matter, as described by Plotinus, and sheer badness. In other words, even if there is a finite number of stages of unity and plurality and even if there is a last stage, why could not the last stage be something other than matter? Something that still clearly has being and goodness to some minimal degree? This would indeed be impossible, if, as there is some reason to believe, Plotinus subscribes to a principle such as: everything that has some being and goodness generates an image of itself. In that case, this supposed stage would not be the last.

This issue is, however, complicated by the fact that the realm of bodies and bodily forms, is prima facie just such a level where there is some vestige of being and goodness but no generation: bodily forms are "dead" (cf. *Enn*. III.8.2, 20–34); they do not, any more than matter itself, have the power to convert towards their higher sources, which for Plotinus seems to be a precondition of generating a new level. So why could the process not have stopped at the level of bodies and bodily forms? The full answer may be complicated and in need of a much fuller account than I shall attempt here but I shall let the following suffice for our present purposes: the level of bodies and bodily forms is not independent of the level of matter, which bodies presuppose; these two levels come together. So there can be no talk of the process from the Good stopping at the level of bodies before reaching matter. Bodies and bodily forms are such as they are because matter is there and they are enmattered.

But wouldn't what I have just said amount to a breach of the Principle of Prior Possession?[47] Would not the story I have told amount to a breach of a principle that Plotinus indeed shares with Plato and Aristotle, that the effect is somehow already contained in the cause and that the effect, hence, resembles the cause? Should not the last emanation resemble its cause or else the last cause fail to produce an image of itself?

There may be two ways of tackling this question. One way would be to suggest that the causal powers at the penultimate stage that produces matter exceed its paradigmatic powers. Or to put it simply: the lowest phase of soul that produces matter produces something but its production is not an image of the maker. So if we understand the Principle of Prior Possession as implying that all production is the production of an image of the cause, this final production would constitute an exception to the principle. So in that case, we would have an effect, something produced, that is not an image of its cause. That the last product should constitute an exception to a general pattern is not particularly disconcerting: the extremes in Plotinus' system, the Good and matter, are in several other ways exceptional and the production of matter differs from that of the higher stages.[48] So I think this would be something that Plotinus would not find particularly difficult to live with and it would not introduce any obnoxious inconsistency into his account. But, alternatively, we might suppose that matter is indeed a sort of image of its immediate cause, the lowest phase of soul, which, after all, is itself weak in comparison to the higher soul and Intellect. But on this account the loss involved in the production of this final image would still result in something with all the negative attributes of matter. In other words, it might be consistently held that matter is an image of the lowest phase of soul, which is an image of the higher soul, which is an image of Intellect, which is an image of the Good and yet deny that matter is an image of the Good. So matter is still a sort of image but what it is an image of is already so diffused that if there is to be an image of it which, furthermore, was more diffused than its producer, the result would be matter. The underlying thought here is in any case that the notion of "being an image of something" is not transitive: C may be an image of B and an image of A but it does not follow that C is an image of A. A noteworthy feature of Plotinus' view on the production of the different stages starting

from the Good is that every image (with the exception of the last one) is similar to its paradigmatic cause, i.e. unified to some degree, but also dissimilar, i.e. less unified than its cause. Hence, an image of X is both similar to X and dissimilar to it in the same respect, being unified and being less unified.

This gives rise to some baffling features of the system already at the level of the Good and Intellect. For even if the first product of the One, Intellect, is not bad, it is evidently less good and less unified than the Good itself. So already at the very first stage the Good produces something that is inferior, worse, one is tempted to say, and dissimilar to itself. But of course, if the Good is to produce anything else, its product has got to be less good than itself. Moreover, it is a fundamental assumption of the system that the Good will produce something else. Given that this is so, and the other assumptions we have considered, it follows that in the end there will be something with the characteristics of matter and this is indeed reasonably described as badness.

Another consequence of these last considerations is that it may become somewhat puzzling why Plotinus reserves the term "bad" to items in the sensible world. We might expect that indeed Intellect, even if it is very good, is also a little bit bad, since it does not quite live up to the perfection of the Good, and parallel reasoning applies to Soul. We might even think that such a view, that Intellect and Soul are a little bit bad, is implied by the line I took on the sense of "bad" at stake in the argument leading up to the definition of badness in terms of privative notions. It is, however, not so in Plotinus' view: "bad" is reserved for the sensible realm. As we have seen, Plotinus is ready to admit that Soul and even Intellect are in some ways deficient as compared with the Good, they are not bad, may indeed be perfect after their kind (see p. 92 above).

One reason for this is no doubt that Plotinus takes very seriously Plato's claim in *Theaetetus* 176a that "evils can never be done away with (. . .) for there must always be something opposed to the good; and they cannot have their place among the gods, but must inevitably hover about mortal nature and this region." In his view any soul can be said to belong to the divine realm, so he has Plato's word for it that there is nothing bad in souls. Another, and as it were more philosophical, explanation for his stance here is the fact that he insists that even souls are substances, complete beings, whereas items in the sensible realm fail to be. Thus, though admitting that Soul and Intellect are less perfect than the Good, Plotinus would insist that intelligible items are perfect *after their kind*. The intelligible horse, say, even if it is not the most perfect thing possible and is deficient in relation to the Good, is nevertheless in no way deficient as a horse. Sensible beings, on the other hand, because they have share in matter, fail: they are not fully and exclusively what they are said to be. Hence, they are poor, i.e. bad, beings.

In conclusion I contend that Plotinus' views on matter and badness are indeed consistent. At least the regular objections to them fail. His metaphysical views on the nature of matter as a formless substrate obviously found resonance in various Christian authors. He may have directly influenced Christian thinkers such as Gregory of Nyssa and Basil and even Augustine.[49] Plotinus' exact take on badness as matter, however, did not have a following in Christianity in the Middle Ages

or thereafter. One reason is no doubt the accident of Pseudo-Dionysius' immense influence – his views on the issue strongly reflect Proclus' position as opposed to Plotinus'.

Notes

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2 In chapter 6 of *Enn.* I.8., Plotinus argues that the Good and matter are opposites. This involves introducing a wider sense of "opposite" than Aristotle's *Categories* 5 allow for: primary being (*ousia*) has no contrary according to Aristotle. Plotinus seems to take this as implying that that which is beyond being, i.e. the Good, cannot have a contrary either. He argues against this, concluding that "But things which are completely separate, and in which there are present in the one the contraries to whatever is the fulfillment of the being of the other, must surely be most of all contraries, if 'by contraries we mean things that are furthest removed from each other'" (*Enn.* I.8.6, 38–41; cf. *Cat*. 6, 6a17–18).

3 For this aspect of Stoicism, see Michael Frede (2011), chapter 5.

4 E.g. Plato, *Theaet*. 176, *Rep*. 379c; 617e, *Tim*. 29e–30a.

5 Plutarch, *De anima procreatione in Timaeo* 1014b; Proclus, *In Tim*. I, 382.5–7.

6 See also Numenius, fr. 52 (des Places) and Iamblichus' account of previous Platonist views in *De anima* 23.

7 For a short overview of ancient authors addressing this question, see O'Meara 1999: 91–92. See also Enrico Moro's chapter in this volume.

8 O'Brien 1969.

9 O'Brien has since forcefully and industriously defended and expounded his view of matter as generated by the lowest phase of the World-Soul in a number of publications: I refer here only to his O'Brien 1971, 1996, 1999 and his latest 2011a, 2011b and 2012. There are several more.

10 Among dissenting voices we find Hans-Rudolph Schwyzer 1973, who held that for Plotinus matter is ungenerated; Kevin Corrigan 1986, who argues for multiple generations of matter; Jean-Marc Narbonne 2007, who holds sensible matter to be generated from intelligible matter, and John Phillips 2009, to whom O'Brien responds in his three latest articles listed in the bibliography.

11 A slightly earlier treatise, "On providence" (*Enn.* III.2. [47] and III.3 [48]), might suggest that Plotinus essentially gives the Stoic answers that I also dubbed as the Christian ones: the evils aren't bad after all and that you will see this if you adopt a wider perspective on the cosmos and, secondly, that badness is the result of human failure having to do with our freedom of choice, cf. St. Augustine, *De Ordine* 1.1.1–1.2.3 and *De libero arbitrio*, especially book 1. How these accounts can be harmonised with claiming matter to be the root of evil I shall not address here.

12 There is considerable scholarly literature dealing with Proclus' objections. The following are those that I have found particularly illuminating and, in some cases, also challenging: Dominic O'Meara 1998, "Evil in Plotinus," where he discusses Proclus' objections without taking a clear stand on the dispute. There is Jan Opsomer's 2001

article in *Phronesis* "Proclus vs. Plotinus on Matter (*De mal. subs*. 30–7)," clearly siding with Proclus; O'Meara 2005 is again out with an article in a Festschrift for Denis O'Brien, "The Metaphysics of Evil in Plotinus." Christian Schäfer comes to Plotinus' defense in *Phronesis* in 2004 but at the cost of denying that matter is badness as such. Opsomer again critically assesses O'Meara's and Schäfer's articles in Opsomer 2007, putting up a strong defense for Proclus' viewpoints.

13 *De malorum subsistentia* is the last one of three short treatises, together referred to as *Tria opuscula*, the other ones being *De libertate* and *De providentia*. These treatises are extant only in William of Moerbeke's Latin 13th century translation. There is a fine English translation in Opsomer and Steel 2003.
14 See especially Proclus, *De mal. subs.* 32.
15 See *De mal. subs*. 31.18–21.
16 Opsomer 2007: 180.
17 *Ibid*.
18 On goodness after its kind, see Georg Henrik von Wright 1963: 19–20.
19 See von Wright 1963: 23.
20 Cf. Aristotle, *Met*. 12, 1072b 14.
21 The view that the realm of soul also belongs to what truly is pervasive in the *Enneads* but is hammered in especially strongly in "On the presence of being, one and the same, everywhere as a whole" (VI.4. – 5. [24–25]).
22 Plotinus, *Enn*. I.8.3, 22–25. The translation of Plotinus' text here and elsewhere in this chapter is substantially that of Armstrong in the Loeb Classical Library but usually with modifications.
23 O'Meara 1999: 109–110.
24 Opsomer 2007: 180.
25 The views of Schäfer and Opsomer differ importantly, however, in that the former thinks that Plotinus too does not hold matter to be bad in itself, a view with which Opsomer disagrees. I am sure that Opsomer is right on this.
26 Opsomer 2007: 183.
27 Plotinus, *Enn.* I.8.4, 1–6.
28 The following paragraphs expand on the account of matter, bodies and spatiality in Emilsson 2017: 200–204.
29 To say that matter becomes a bulk is a manner of speaking: strictly speaking matter never becomes anything.
30 On the notion of bulk (*onkos*) in Plotinus, see Brisson 2000.
31 For the individuation of bodies, their parts and qualities, see *Enn.* IV.2. [4] 1, 11–17; 36–41; *Enn.* VI.4. [22] 1, 17–26 and Emilsson 1990.
32 On Plotinus' doctrine of the inaffectability of matter, see Christopher Isaac Noble 2013.
33 Later Neoplatonic commentators note Plotinus' doctrine about "the battle for place" in the sensible realm: see Elias, *In Porphyrii Isagogen*, 85.14–17; *In Aristotelis Categorias* 5, 179.1–13; David, *In Porphyrii Isagogen* 18,149.6–11.
34 Plotinus, *Enn.* III.2.1, 27–35.
35 Plotinus, *Enn.* I.8.5, 21–26.
36 In the slightly earlier treatise on providence, *Enn*. III.2. and 3. [47–48], he goes on about the conflicts inherent to the sensible world. The sense one gets is that these are all part of what is determined by providence.
37 See *Enn.* I.1. [53] 7–11. "What is the living being and what is man."
38 *Enn.* V.1. [10] 10, 11, "On the three principal hypostases," and *Enn.* IV.8. [6] 8, 2, "On the descent of soul into bodies."
39 Cf. Plato, *Symp.* 206d.
40 Plotinus, *Enn.* I.8.14, 44–49.
41 The doctrine of the inaffectability of the soul is thoroughly discussed in a recent article by Christopher Isaac Noble 2016. See also Emilsson 2017: 161–165 and Caluori 2015: 152–163.

42 Fleet 1995: commentary *ad loc*.
43 Plotinus, *Enn.* I.8.8, 3–9.
44 I.8.4, 20–21. Cf. also *Enn.* I.8.14, 42; I.8.14, 54. The last reference runs: οὐ γὰρ ἂν ἐγένετο εἰς αὐτὴν μὴ τῇ παρουσίᾳ αὐτῆς τὴν γένεσιν λαβοῦσα. Armstrong translates it, I think wrongly or at least misleadingly, as: "soul would not have come to it [matter] unless its presence had given soul the occasion of coming to birth." O'Meara 1999: 83 translation, which recognises the notion of becoming at play here, is in my view better: "Car l'âme ne serait pas venue vers la matière, si, à cause de la presence da la matière, elle n'avait pas eu l'occasion d'entrer dans le devenir."
45 This is clearly laid out in Caluori 2015, chapter 6. Plotinus' choice of the word, "being cramped" is no doubt an allusion to Plato, *Symp*. 206d, as HS_2 note in their apparatus.
46 Plotinus, *Enn.* I.8.7, 16–22.
47 This principle is what is called Axiom 1 in Opsomer 2007.
48 Neither the Good nor matter, and these alone, have being and both are described as *apeira* (infinite, indefinite). On the peculiarities in the mode of production of matter, see O'Brien 1996: 182–183.
49 See Moro's chapter in this volume.

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6 Proclus, Philoponus, and Maximus

The paradigm of the world and temporal beginning

Torstein Theodor Tollefsen

In this chapter I compare Neoplatonist and Christian doctrines of creation, focusing in particular on the role played by the notion that there is an eternal paradigm and the related problem of the temporal beginning of the created cosmos. The doctrine of creation was a major issue between Neoplatonists and Christians in late antiquity. The classical Christian doctrine of creation reached its completion in major thinkers of the fourth century, like Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, Ambrose, and Augustine. One important Christian claim was that God created the cosmos in such a way that it began its existence a definite number of time-units ago. Basil the Great says:[1] "In fact, it is even possible for you to learn when the formation of this world began, if only going back from the present to the past you would strive to discover the first day of the generation of the world." Gradually it also became a standard Christian view that God made the world from a plan or a paradigm conceived in His mind. The doctrine of such a paradigm was central to Neoplatonist philosophy as well. Proclus (412–485) produced a book in eighteen arguments against those who teach a temporal beginning of the cosmos. The paradigm of the world played an important role in his arguments. The Christian philosopher John Philoponus of Alexandria (c.490–c.570) challenged Proclus' arguments in 529 with his *Against Proclus On the Eternity of the World*. One should expect his powerful and detailed critique to be picked up by other philosophically minded early Byzantine theologians like Maximus the Confessor (580–662). Maximus accepts the idea of a divine paradigm and argues *against* the doctrine that the world is without a beginning. One of the things we shall look into in this chapter is whether one may find any traces of Philoponus' arguments in Maximus. However, I can say in advance that the result is rather meagre.

According to mainstream late Platonist doctrine the world is created "everlastingly." I shall return to this term below. The Christians claimed, against this view, that the world is created, as Maximus says, "recently" (προσφάτως).[2] Two Christian dialogues from the late fifth century engage with the topic of creation in defence of the Christian position.[3] Aeneas of Gaza and Zacharias of Mytilene both had their background in the intellectual milieus of Gaza and Alexandria.[4] In their dialogues they attack what they considered the Neoplatonist opinion that the cosmos is *eternal*. The challenge they addressed probably originated with Proclus. However, according to the view of Sorabji, it is Philoponus who for the first

time puts Christianity on the offensive in the debate on whether the cosmos had a beginning.[5]

Proclus on creation

We should first address a terminological point: Proclus would never have accepted that the world is *eternal*. What he claims is that it is *everlasting*. In the Proclean arguments, as reported by Philoponus, the terms *aiōnios, aïdios*, and *aei* are used discriminately, so that *aiōnios* obviously means eternal (in an atemporal sense), *aïdios* means everlasting, and *aei* is always, for ever. Share comments on this:

> Proclus always reserves *aiōnios* for entities which are outside of time, such as God or transcendental form, but uses *aïdios* or *aei* either of these same entities or of things which endure for ever in time, which, for him, include the world, matter, imminent form, generation and time itself.[6]

In his commentary on Plato's *Timaeus* Proclus says that the sensible cosmos has its infinite existence in becoming (γιγνόμενον) and not in being (ὄν). As such it does not have its whole essence or activity in a unified state.[7] Infinity (ἀπειρία) for time and infinity for eternity, however, are not the same.[8] We could probably say that the first kind of infinity is quantitative while the second is qualitative. One should expect this quantitative infinity of the realm of becoming to be progressing temporally from moment to moment so that it would be an Aristotelian *potential infinity* and not an actual one.[9] In Sorabji's words, this kind of infinity is "an ever expandable finitude."[10]

Proclus describes a picture of the cosmos as *it has come into being, both as always coming into being and as always having done so* (καὶ γέγονε καὶ γιγνόμενός ἐστιν ἀεὶ καὶ γεγονώς).[11] One wonders how this is to be understood. One way of taking it would be to hold that whenever something is in the process of coming into being, in the next moment it has come into being. In that case the process would go step by step and it could be measured by time as an ever-extendible finitude. However, this does not seem to be the right interpretation. Cosmic time itself is not "an extendible finitude." Proclus says it came into being with the heavens and came into being *in its entirety*.[12] Heaven, he says, meaning the cosmos, comes into being in infinite time and is incessant (ἀνέκλειπτος) in both directions, i.e. towards the past and the future. How shall we reconcile this with our experience that entities within the cosmos originate, grow, are completed, and are destroyed through a successive row of time-units? Further, is it not reasonable to believe that the whole that is the sum of generated and corruptible parts, is itself subject to generation and corruption?

Proclus' understanding of the world differs from such a view. Since the whole is not generated in the way that it evolves successively from a beginning in the past, it possesses its complete character everlastingly, and its everlasting temporal existence is infinite in actuality. It is very difficult to imagine such a thing. As mentioned above, we observe that things come into existence, develop, and

perish. We may, for instance, observe a butterfly gradually emerging from its pupa eventually for taking to its wings. When we follow such a sequence of movements, we count them according to a temporal scheme. In our experience of each and every present event of such a sequence we are at the limit of time that borders on the future. On the Proclean view, the cosmos as a totality does not evolve like this. With regard to movement and time it is everlastingly complete.[13] It is rather difficult to imagine how observable events on the small scale fit into such a cosmos. The sequences of events that we observe unfolding in time have, on this view, at least to be understood as *not* disturbing the harmonious state of the whole. The destruction of one thing must be seen as the generation of another thing, never tipping the balance towards any lack or excess: the All is stable in its totally generated sameness.

This Proclean world-view is the target of John Philoponus' arguments in his *Against Proclus On the Eternity of the World*. We shall below focus on the two central ideas of Philoponus' critique mentioned in the introduction, i.e. (i) the function played by the paradigm of the world in the act of creation, and (ii) the Christian claim that the cosmos had a beginning a definite number of time-units ago. These points facilitate a comparison with Maximus as well.

The paradigm of the world

According to Philoponus, the second argument for the everlastingness of the cosmos was based on the idea of the relation between paradigm (παράδειγμα) and image (εἰκών): since the paradigm is eternal, the copy must be eternal, that is everlasting, as well, because it belongs to a paradigm that it is relative to a copy.[14] It must therefore necessarily be an everlasting copy of an everlasting (or, more precisely, an eternal) paradigm in the divine realm of being. Philoponus denounces this by two arguments: (a) if the paradigm consists of Forms, and if the Forms are substance, their being belong to them in their own right, and their being a paradigm is not essential to them. Consequently, if there is such a substance, there is no necessity that there should be a copy as well.[15] (b) If the Forms of the paradigm are not substance, but certain creative *logoi* or concepts (νοήσεις) in accordance with which the creator frames things, the being of such *logoi* consists in their being concepts, and they become a paradigm only when the Creator acts in accordance with them. There is no need that the being of created things follows upon the existence of these *logoi* qua concepts of the divine mind.[16]

What is the difference between the paradigm being Forms or *logoi*? In this regard Philoponus' text is not that clear, but it is possible that he considers two hypotheses, viz. (i) that the paradigm consists of Platonic Forms as substance existing independently of the divine mind,[17] and (ii) that the Forms are divine thoughts. If this is correct, the point might be that he wants to show that Proclus' doctrine cannot hold whatever way one looks at the issue.

Philoponus argues that if the Forms are substance their being belongs to them in their own right and being a paradigm is not essential to them. If, for instance, there is a Form of being human, to be human is an essential nature and to be a paradigm

that is related to something else does not belong to it as such. Consequently, if there is such a paradigm there is no necessity that there is a copy as well.[18] If the Forms are not substance but certain creative *logoi* in accordance with which the Creator makes things, the being of such *logoi* consists in their being concepts. There is no need that the being of created things follows upon the existence of the *logoi* qua concepts of the divine mind.[19] According to Philoponus, the *logoi* of all things are present in divine foreknowledge without division.[20] This sequence of thoughts already indicates a distinction that will be played out more clearly in arguments presented below: according to Philoponus one should distinguish between the *logoi* (a) as principles of knowledge and (b) as principles of making. The Creator's knowledge of beings in His thinking is to be distinguished from the Creator's acting in accordance with this knowledge in the act of creation.[21] We shall find the same distinction in Maximus.

In his third argument Proclus makes the point that the Creator will always be Creator in *actuality*, and for that reason things will always undergo creation.[22] Otherwise He will sometimes be a potential Creator, but in that case we have, in accordance with an Aristotelian principle, to presuppose another actual power that actualises what is potential. Therefore we must either to go back indefinitely seeking one cause before another or else we shall have to acknowledge God in the first place as a Creator in actuality.[23] Consequently, the cosmos has always existed.

Philoponus argues against this by distinguishing between two kinds of potentiality and two kinds of actuality.[24] This distinction is found in Aristotle's *On the soul*, the first chapter of book 2. For Philoponus, first potentiality will be the possession of a natural aptitude (ἐπιτηδειότης) of an entity to become something because its nature is receptive of it, for instance the aptitude of a child to become a grammarian. First actuality is when this is actualised, as when a child has learnt the principles of grammar. This condition may again not be activated at the present moment, since the child is sleeping or playing, and this first actuality therefore constitutes a second potentiality. This second potentiality consists in a ἕξις that may be actualised in a second actuality when someone is practising his knowledge. The ἕξις or "having" may be interpreted as a possessed *capacity* for acting in some way or another. We may summarise Philoponus' exposition in the following way:

First potentiality	*First actuality = second potentiality = capacity*	*Second actuality*
Natural aptitude, i.e. what a nature is capable of, for instance a human being is capable of learning grammar.	Acquired capacity, for instance knowledge of grammar that may not be executed at the moment.	The actual practicing of what one is capable of.
	God is always actual Creator in capacity and is always capable to execute that capacity or not to execute it.	God creates the world.

According to Philoponus that which brings second potentiality into second actuality need not be an external mover, but is within the power of the entity that possesses the (acquired) capacity.

Philoponus strengthens his argument when commenting on Proclus' fourth argument for the eternity of the world. Proclus made the point that if God enters from not creating to creating He suffers a change (movement), and a change takes time. Since this is inconceivable God is always creating the world.[25] Against this Philoponus argues that it is not possible to conceive of any movement between not producing and producing.[26] The execution of an actuality (second actuality) out of a habit (first actuality = second potentiality = capacity) is without time or instantaneous (ἄχρονος). The end or limit of not making and the beginning of making takes place in the same instant. Philoponus argues extensively for this principle. In an illuminating summary he says that a person who stops not writing passes to writing at one and the same moment.[27] Between not writing and writing there is no lapse of time and no movement, which is rather obvious. Philoponus claims that this goes for all such transitions. God's making or His actuality as a whole is neither movement nor takes time when He makes all things by His will alone (μόνῳ τῷ θέλειν).[28]

Even if God always possesses the concepts or *logoi* of things in the same way and brings things into existence by His thought alone, it is not necessary that all things should have coexisted with the thoughts of God from eternity.[29] God is above all necessity and it is therefore no need that what is thought by God should exist simultaneously with (ἅμα) His thoughts. As said above, Philoponus applies the distinction between the *logoi* as principles of knowledge and principles of making. He says:

> And so, as has been shown, the creative *logoi* in God always possess actuality and perfection but God brings each thing into existence and gives it being when He so wishes, bringing all things into existence by just willing them; and He so wishes at the time when coming into existence is good for the things that come into existence; and what is in accordance with nature is in every way good, as was shown in chapter one.[30]

In his replies to Proclus' sixteenth argument Philoponus says that even if God always had the will that the ordered state exists, it does not mean that He willed it to exist always.[31] The force of the argument depends on the soundness of the idea of an immediate transition from a state of eternal capacity, as God's contemplation of His *logoi*, to the "external" actuality of creation. The term immediate transition means that it takes no time and is without movement. The elements of Philoponus' argument may be summarised thus:

God's eternal having of the *logoi* in His contemplative thought, i.e. His internal actuality.	The immediate transition, by God's will alone, is non-temporal, without change or movement.	God's external actuality of creation.

God may eternally think the *logoi*, and He may eternally think and will that they are to be actualised externally in a temporal sequence that makes beings occur successively in accordance with before and after, but this does not necessitate that things occur eternally.

If we now turn to Maximus the Confessor, we find a picture that is similar to what we found in Philoponus. It is, of course, tempting when making comparisons to pick up what resembles and exclude what does not. However, I cannot see that there is much if anything that differs in Philoponus' extensive arguments and in what Maximus says concerning the divine *logoi* and the creation of the world. There is, however, a difference in the style of writing. Philoponus is a professional philosopher while Maximus' philosophy is developed by a monk with different concerns. The former develops lengthy arguments of a theoretical nature in order to address philosophical challenges while the arguments of the latter are directed to dogmatic and spiritual challenges. However, concerning cosmology they come quite close to one another even if the terminology and the style of argument differ.

In a passage in *Ambiguum* 7 (*Amb. Io.*) some of the ideas that we found in Philoponus occur in a rather dense but concise form:

> In God the *logoi* of all things are steadfastly fixed, and it is on the basis of these that God is said to know all things before they came into being, for in absolute truth, in Him and with Him are all things, even though all things – things present and things to come – were not called into existence simultaneously with their *logoi* or with their being known by God. Instead, in the wisdom of the Creator, individual things were created at the appropriate moment in time, in a manner consistent with their *logoi*, and thus they received in themselves actual existence as beings.[32]

Here we have two important things: (i) God is said to know (γινώσκειν) all things in their *logoi* before creation. (ii) Beings do not exist simultaneously with their *logoi*, but receive being in accordance with a temporal scheme. Here the double function of the *logoi* which we found in Philoponus is presupposed: they are principles of knowledge and principles of making. In *Chapters on love* Maximus says that "When the Demiurge willed, He gave being to and manifested that knowledge of created beings which eternally pre-existed in Him" (Τὴν ἐξ ἀϊδίου ἐν αὐτῷ ὁ Δημιουργὸς τῶν ὄντων προϋπάρχουσαν γνῶσιν, ὅτε ἐβουλήθη, οὐσίωσε καὶ προεβάλετο).[33] This *eternally pre-existing knowledge of beings* is, I suppose, the same what is described in *Ambiguum* 7 as God's knowledge of beings in their *logoi*. According to the *Chapters on love*, God is eternally a Creator.[34] However, this does not mean that the cosmos is eternal. Beings are known but are not for that matter immediately made: they do not exist simultaneously with their being known but receive being "at the proper time" (τῷ ἐπιτηδείῳ καιρῷ). This "at the proper time" is surely equivalent with Philoponus' "at the time when coming into existence is good for the things that come into existence." It is not explicitly said by Maximus, but the only way to conceive of God as an eternal Creator

primary to the actual making of beings, is to think of Him the way Philoponus does: God is always a Creator in capacity. Between God's knowing creatures, i.e. in His capacity, and their actual existence there passes *an act of divine will to create*. However, the transition from knowing to willing cannot have a temporal moment "in between," but must be immediate. Maximus says God creates "when He wishes" (ὅτε βούλεται), "when He willed" (ὅτε ἐβουλήθη), and creation is therefore "recently" (προσφάτως) brought into being.[35] However, even if one may search for the reason (ἡ αἰτία) why God created one should not inquire into "how and why" (πῶς καὶ διὰ τί) creation is recently made since that is beyond what humans can grasp.

It seems immediately rather strange that Maximus says we may inquire into the *reason* but not the "why." The problem is easily solved, however, since what he urges is that we may definitely ask "why did God make the cosmos?" but what we should not inquire into is "why did He create the cosmos *recently*?" The answer to the first question is soteriologically important: God made the cosmos out of goodness and love. When it comes to the second question we must take two things into consideration: (a) As we have seen, Maximus claims like Philoponus that the cosmos is made recently, and he would probably not object to the enquiry into and argumentation for this alleged fact. As we shall see below, he, according to my interpretation, produces arguments himself. (b) What he would claim to be beyond an inquisitive human mind is the "how and why" God decided to create the world for exactly *this* number of time-units ago. I suppose what he has in mind is the old question of "why not sooner?"[36] Since Maximus holds that time began at the making of the world and that the world has a certain age, this question could be answered by saying there cannot be any "sooner" since there was no time "before" the cosmos. In accordance with what we found in *Ambiguum* 7 above, Maximus could also say that each being is created at the appropriate time, and (as Philoponus said) it was good for it to be made at this particular moment. The reason for this, however, is hidden in God since it belongs to the secrets of divine providence.

If we try to evaluate the views described above, it seems to be no conceptual or doctrinal differences between Maximus and Philoponus. But even if this is the case it does not imply that Maximus is dependent on Philoponus for his views. The style of reasoning, the choice of terms, and the space allotted to develop a specific topic differ. There are no obvious reasons to claim any direct influence. However, the question of influence is a tricky one. I believe that major thinkers *think*, they do not just succumb to what others have said. On the other hand, Philoponus and Maximus had some common concerns, and it is probable that Maximus knew of John Philoponus' theology and philosophy. Such knowledge could, however, have reached him through the report of others and not necessarily by acquaintance with any of Philoponus' writings. What we can conclude though is that if Maximus had such knowledge it was received into his own creative mind and set to use within the horizon of his own agenda. When we turn to the specific topic of the temporal beginning of the cosmos below, we shall again see that Maximus' arguments have a certain similarity with Philoponus' way of reasoning,

but once again we cannot for that matter be sure that Maximus knew much of his philosophical achievements.

The temporal beginning of the world

We shall start with the notion of the *corruptibility* of the world. Philoponus thinks that *if* the cosmos is corruptible by nature *then* it must by implication be generated as well. In his sixth argument against Proclus, Philoponus argues extensively that the cosmos is naturally corruptible. He uses a lot of space to show that Proclus distorts Plato's doctrine of cosmology since Plato agrees, according to Philoponus, both that the world is corruptible by nature and that it has a temporal beginning.

Proclus argues that if the Creator alone bound together the world, He alone can "unbind" it (εἰ ὁ δημιουργὸς μόνος συνέδησεν, μόνος ἂν λύσοι τὸν κόσμον·). Since the cosmos is good, if He actually should unbind it, He would have turned from doing well to doing evil, which is impossible. So if the cosmos is indissoluble, it is imperishable, and if imperishable it is ungenerated.[37]

The main line of Philoponus' counter-argument may be readily summarised. Every finite body is by nature such that it has a finite power. A finite power will be exhausted and come to an end. Therefore, a finite body is by nature corruptible.[38] Further, if the parts of a thing are subject to breakdown and alteration, and if the whole is nothing but all its parts, then the whole must undergo the same processes as the parts.[39] The idea that the whole of something whose parts are subject to corruption and change must itself at some point submit to the same changes as its parts, is old. According to Diogenes Laertius this is a Stoic doctrine.[40] It is taken up by Basil the Great in his *In Hexaëmeron*.[41]

Philoponus' arguments bring us in fact to what has been considered a new paradigm in physical theory, viz. the so-called impetus theory.[42] To put it quite simply, this refers to the doctrine that motion depends on the transmission of an exhaustible moving force, which passes from a moving cause to a movable object and acts on it instantaneously.[43] To put it even more simply: "impetus is an inner force impressed into a moving body from without."[44] In his commentary on Aristotle's *Physics*, Philoponus says "some incorporeal kinetic power must be transmitted by the thrower into the thing thrown."[45]

In the present connection the point is that the Creator possesses an infinite force or power while the world is of a limited nature and is therefore invested with a corresponding limited force that eventually is exhausted.[46] Proclus himself believes that the world cannot exist without the presence of divine power and the eternal presence of such a power keeps it in being for ever. It receives this power successively in the amount it can take.[47] One may well ask what the real difference is between Proclus and Philoponus in this regard. The short answer may be that according to Proclus the continuous divine presence nullifies the otherwise corruptible forces of the processes within the cosmos so that it may be claimed that the world is in fact without beginning and end. The destruction of one thing is the generation of another in a rhythm that continues in a harmonious

way throughout the complete everlasting existence of the cosmos. Philoponus, on the other hand, stresses that the world comes to be with a temporal beginning as the result of God's willing and what has a beginning by nature must by nature pass out of existence since it is invested with a limited power.

According to Philoponus, the world is naturally corruptible. In addition to the argument from corruptibility he is known for his claim that there cannot be an infinite series of time-units and any infinite causal chains.[48] He argues that "an infinite number cannot exist in actuality, nor can it be traversed in counting, nor can anything be greater than infinity, nor [can] infinity be increased." We have seen already that according to Proclus the cosmos comes into being in infinite time and is incessant both in past and future directions, in Philoponus' words: "Therefore, he [i.e. Proclus] says, if the cosmos is like the paradigm with respect to its always existing, then it will be infinite in both directions and have neither beginning nor end to its existence."[49] This kind of infinity would be an actualised infinity and as such held to be impossible. Philoponus holds that it is possible to extend time and increase number infinitely, that is if we hold that the infinite is potential (i.e. an extendible finitude), but if time is an actualised infinity, present events will reach us over infinitely many time-units.[50] Up till this moment we would have traversed an infinity of time-units and it is impossible to traverse the infinite. It is, then, impossible for a particular event to take place if an infinite number of events have to go before it. Philoponus further claims that in this picture even limited time-units are impossible, since if time is composed of limited parts it must itself be limited. There is also the additional problem: if up till now we have traversed an actualised infinite past, the next moments that occur will increase the infinite, which is impossible. The causal chains in the cosmos are on this account definitely limited numerically and temporally, i.e. with regard to the number of items in a causal chain, and with regard to how long a shift from cause to effect has occurred.

We have already seen a couple of times above that Maximus claims the cosmos to be created recently (προσφάτως).[51] This is said in a context where he warns us not to inquire into "how and why" (πῶς καὶ διὰ τί) the created world is recently made. It is an obvious corollary of the notion of a "recent" creation that the world is not everlasting but rather came into being a definite number of time-units ago. In *Ambiguum* 7 Maximus says God brought beings to be out of non-being.[52] Beings, he says further, exist first potentially and later actually.[53] They do not exist simultaneously with their *logoi*, but are brought into being in accordance with these *logoi* at the appropriate moment for each. What is infinite and what is delimited, what is beyond being and what is being, what is measureless and what is measured, what cannot be subject to categorisation and what is constituted by all categories cannot exist in simultaneous infinity. The world, in short, depends on divine power for its existence and cannot be eternal.

In a prolonged argument developed in the tenth *Ambiguum* Maximus at least partly tries to defend the view that the cosmos has a recent beginning.[54] The argument has a lot of details into which we are not going to follow him and is not very clear in all respects, but the main lines may be identified.

Considering this argument it strikes me that it has some features in common with a sequence in Plato's *Timaeus*. In the *Timaeus* Plato distinguishes between Being and Becoming (τὸ ὄν and τὸ γιγνόμενον).[55] Everything that becomes must necessarily become owing to some cause. The cosmos belongs to the sphere of Becoming since it is visible, tangible, possessed of a body, and therefore makes up the realm of τὰ αἰσθητά.[56] Plato argues further that in the act of creation God "took over all that was visible, seeing that it was not in a state of rest but in a state of discordant and disorderly motion (κινούμενον πλημμελῶς καὶ ἀτάκτως)."[57] God then installed order in this visible substance.

In certain respects Maximus' argument is similar to this chain of reasoning: what is in motion (i.e. κίνησις, the realm of motion is equivalent with Plato's Becoming) must have an ἀρχή and an αἰτία – the two terms reflect slightly different aspects of his doctrine of causality.[58] Contemplating the beauty and greatness of God's creatures one grasps God as their ἀρχή, αἰτία, and ποιητής. From this, Maximus says, one may put aside "the error that the world is ἄναρχος." The crucial term *archē* is ambiguous and some of the differences between the Neoplatonist and the Christian understanding of creation can be highlighted from this. *Archē* may be understood in two different ways in the context of these arguments: (a) as ontological origin or source and (b) as temporal beginning. The two senses of *archē* open up two possible lines of reasoning: (1) If the term *archē* means ontological origin or principle, then no Neoplatonist would commit the error of claiming that the cosmos is ἄναρχος. The world definitely has an origin in the divinity. In this regard Neoplatonists and Maximus would be in agreement. (2) If Maximus' argument is directed against Neoplatonists and if Maximus knew some basic features of Neoplatonic cosmology, then it is probable that *archē* means temporal beginning in the present context. If this is the case, the Neoplatonists would definitely claim that the cosmos is "without beginning," and Maximus would claim the opposite: the world is *not* ἄναρχος in the sense of *not* having a temporal beginning. It seems pretty certain that the term has temporal connotations here.

Maximus claims that the world was created recently and that it has existed for a limited time-span. How can this be demonstrated? In the first place he focuses on particular entities in the world. He says that whatever is in motion *began* (ἤρξατο, 1st aorist) its movement. I think Constas is correct when he paraphrases this as "began to move at a particular point in time."[59] Motions have beginning and end, an efficient and a final cause. They exist in a delimited stretch of time "between" a *terminus a quo* and a *terminus ad quem*. All beings are in motion except God, the first mover who is unmoved.

However, how does one argue from what happens with particulars to what is a basic feature of the All? I suppose the following summarises the crucial point in Maximus long argument: if the world is the total sum of moveable creatures or a system consisting of a sum of such creatures (Plato's realm of Becoming), then the world is a sum of things that begin and end their movements. Maximus describes the cosmos as an interconnected arrangement of generic and specific essences, all of which are delimited qualitatively and quantitatively, temporally,

and spatially.[60] From this one might make the following claim, commented on above, that the whole of something whose parts are subject to corruption and change must itself submit to the same changes as its parts. In that case, the whole world is corruptible by nature, and it has a temporal beginning and end together with the parts that it is composed of.

This reasoning reflects an older argument that we already find in rudimentary form in Basil the Great, but it also picks up some essentials of Philoponus' elaborate sixth argument against Proclus that I commented on above:[61] "When the parts of a thing are subject to breakdown and alteration, the whole of it must, if the whole is nothing other than all its parts, undergo the same [processes]." There is no need, however, that Maximus found this argument in Philoponus. He may well have been acquainted with the basic idea from Basil. Even so, there are definitely some similarities between Maximus and Philoponus, but they may be due to coincidence. It is rather clear, however, that Philoponus' infinity-arguments, so highly valuated by modern scholars, have no impact on Maximus' thought. If Maximus actually was acquainted with Philoponus' doctrines, this might be considered strange. The two thinkers had the same purpose: to defend the Christian doctrine of creation against adversaries, but it seems quite obvious that Maximus did not find Philoponus an indispensable source of arguments for the Christian cause.

Conclusive remarks

The pagan philosopher Proclus and the Christian philosophers Philoponus and Maximus agreed that the Creator eternally contemplated the *logoi* of creatures (i.e. the paradigm) and that there is no change in God. For Proclus the corollary of this is that the cosmos exists everlastingly. Now, contemplation is one thing, thinking might be another matter. In the *Timaeus* Plato says that God "reasoned and discovered" (λογισάμενος οὖν εὕρισκεν) when planning the construction of the world.[62] It is interesting to see that a similar idea occurs in Basil, when speaking of God's "having cast about in His mind and resolved to bring into being things that did not exist" (εἰς νοῦν βαλόμενος καὶ ὁρμήσας ἀγαγεῖν εἰς γένεσιν τὰ μὴ ὄντα).[63] Even if Basil's "having cast about in His mind" (εἰς νοῦν βαλόμενος) is more striking than Plato's "reasoned" (λογισάμενος), the latter as well suggests a kind of calculation or thoughtful movement. How does Proclus, with his almost word for word interpretation, cope with this? He does not accept that the Creator calculates as if being in doubt about the creative procedure. Rather the Creator's intellectual activity, in the words of Runia and Share, "is continuous and unvarying and he 'creates' constantly just by existing."[64] There is, then, no change in God, but even so the Christians claim a temporal beginning for the world. According to Philoponus, this does not imply any kind of change or temporality, since the transition from not making to making is instantaneous. That God eternally willed the temporal state to exist does not mean that He willed it to exist everlastingly.

Why is it important for Christian thinkers to claim a temporal beginning? It seems clear that Neoplatonists and Christians differed on their views of the nature of the divinity and on the divine will. A central Christian notion is the

all-powerful character or omnipotence of God. According to Sorabji many ancient philosophers denied attributes like this.[65] The Christian notion of omnipotence is combined with a distinctive view of divine goodness implying that the deity loves and cares for particular beings. Late antique pagan philosophers disagreed on the extension of providence.[66] For some (like Alexander of Aphrodisias) providence is not concerned with individuals but only with the species while other thinkers (like Proclus) hold that it extends to everything, even if in a non-specific way. The Christian God creates the cosmos not because He has to but because He wills. As we have seen, this will be directed to the making of particular beings at the appropriate time, i.e. when it is good for them to come into existence. The attention of the Christian God is therefore focused on the things He makes in a lot more emphatic way than that of any Neoplatonic divinity.

One aspect of the doctrine of an all-powerful God is that there is no need for any sensible stuff to exist simultaneously (in whatever condition) with the divinity from eternity. This is an old Christian objection to Platonist cosmologies. It is already found in Athanasius of Alexandria who criticises the Platonists for holding that God would be unable to make anything unless matter already existed, "just as a carpenter must have wood first in order to be able to fashion it."[67] In this way one is imputing weakness to God. Athanasius concludes that God in that case will only be a craftsman (τεχνίτης) and not a creator (κτίστης). This objection is probably directed against Platonist cosmologies which held that the present cosmos has a beginning and that matter eternally predated this beginning. However, one does not find such a doctrine in Plotinus who lived earlier than Athanasius or in Proclus who is later. There is no temporal beginning of the present cosmos, and therefore unformed matter does not exist temporally before the present age. Even if the two important figures of Plotinus and Proclus did not teach such a thing, the opinion that this was a common Platonist doctrine was repeated in the writings of Christian thinkers for centuries.

Notes

1 Basil, *Hex*. 1.6; English translation in Way 1983: 10. Greek text in Basile de Césarée, *Homélies sur l'hexaéméron*, Giet 1968: 110.
2 Maximus, *Car*. 4.5, PG 90: 1048d.
3 Aeneas of Gaza: *Theophrastus* with Zacharias of Mytilene: *Ammonius*, translated in Gertz *et al*. 2012.
4 For Aeneas and Zacharias and their milieu, see Champion 2014.
5 Sorabji 1983: 224.
6 Share's introduction to Philoponus, in Share 2004: 7. I wonder, is there a misprint here, should not 'imminent' be "immanent?"
7 Proclus, *In Tim*. 277; English translation of Proclus, *Commentary on Plato's Timaeus*, in Runia and Share 2008: 128. The distinction between being and becoming of course reflects Plato's usage in *Tim*. 27d–28a.
8 Proclus, *In Tim*. 278: (οὐδὲ γὰρ ἡ αὐτὴ ἀπειρία χρόνου καὶ αἰῶνος); Runia and Share 2008: 128.
9 Aristotle, *Phys*. 3, chapter 6.
10 Sorabji 2004: 175.
11 Proclus, *In Tim*. 282; Runia and Share 2008: 134.

12 Proclus, *In Tim*. 281; Runia and Share 2008: 133; χρόνος γὰρ μετ᾽ οὐρανοῦ γέγονεν, οὐ χρόνου μόριον, ἀλλ᾽ ὁ πᾶς χρόνος.
13 Somehow this picture of the cosmos could be compared with Parmenides' "way of truth" and "way of seeming." However, Parmenides' Being is ἀγένητον while Proclus' world is characterised by "generation." Even so, see Parmenides' fragment 8.
14 Philoponus, *Contra Proclum* 24; translation in John Philoponus, *Against Proclus On the Eternity of the World 1–5*, Share 2004: 32.
15 Philoponus, *Contra Proclum* 33–36; Share 2004: 37–38.
16 Philoponus, *Contra Proclum* 36–37; Share 2004: 39.
17 Cf. the Living Creature in Plato, *Tim*. 30c.
18 Philoponus, *Contra Proclum* 33–36; Share 2004: 37–39.
19 Philoponus, *Contra Proclum* 36–37; Share 2004: 39.
20 Philoponus, *Contra Proclum* 40; Share 2004: 41.
21 This distinction becomes classical. It is found in Thomas Aquinas as well.
22 Philoponus, *Contra Proclum* 42–43; Share 2004: 42–43.
23 The term translated as actuality in this sequence is ἐνέργεια. Ἐνέργεια may be translated as activity as well. One should keep in mind that the term actuality is to be understood in a "dynamic" sense as being in activity.
24 Philoponus, *Contra Proclum* 46–47; Share 2004: 44–45.
25 Philoponus, *Contra Proclum* 55–56; Share 2004: 50.
26 Philoponus, *Contra Proclum* 63; Share 2004: 54.
27 *Ibid*.
28 Philoponus, *Contra Proclum* 64; Share 2004: 55.
29 Philoponus, *Contra Proclum* 78; Share 2004: 63.
30 Philoponus, *Contra Proclum* 79; Share 2004: 64.
31 Philoponus, *Contra Proclum* 566; Philoponus, *Against Proclus' On the Eternity of the World 12–18*, translated in Wilberding 2006: 70.
32 Maximus, *Amb. Io*. 7, PG 91: 1081a; Constas 2014: 100–101.
33 Maximus, *Car.* 4.4, PG 90: 1048d.
34 Maximus, *Car.* 4.3, PG 90: 1048c.
35 Cf. Maximus, *Car.* 4.3–5, PG 90: 1048c–d.
36 Cf. Tollefsen 2008: 45–46.
37 Philoponus, *Contra Proclum* 119; Philoponus, *Against Proclus On the Eternity of the World 6–8*, translated in Share 2005: 13.
38 Philoponus, *Contra Proclum* 235; Share 2005: 82.
39 Philoponus, *Contra Proclum* 236; Share 2005: 83.
40 Diogenes Laertius II, 7, *Zeno* 141, in Hicks' translation (LCL) 244–245: "And that of which the parts are perishable is perishable as a whole. Now the parts of the world are perishable, seeing that they are transformed one into another. Therefore the world itself is doomed to perish."
41 Basil, *Hex*. 1.3, Giet 1968: 100; Way 1983: 7.
42 Sorabji 1987: 8, 30.
43 Cf. Sorabji 1987: 84.
44 Sorabji 2004: 348.
45 A relevant section from Philoponus' *In Phys*. is translated in Sorabji 2004: 351–352.
46 God is implanting motive power into the cosmic building, cf. the text from Philoponus, *De opificio mundi* translated in Sorabji 2004: 350.
47 Cf. the quotation from Proclus, *In Tim*., in Sorabji 2004: 355.
48 We find these arguments both in his *Contra Proclum* and in *Contra Aristotelem*. For a translation of the latter cf. John Philoponus, *Against Aristotle on the Eternity of the World*, Wilberding 1987: 143–146, fragment 132. Cf. the essentials of the argument presented in Sorabji 2004: 179–180.

49 Philoponus, *Contra Proclum* 552; Wilberding 2006: 62.
50 Philoponus, *Contra Proclum* 618–20; Wilberding 2006: 100–101.
51 Maximus, *Car*. 4.5, PG 90: 1048d.
52 Maximus, *Amb. Io.* 7, PG 91: 1077c. That the world is created out of nothing is often considered to be a distinctive mark of Christian doctrine. However, one should compare this claim with what Proclus says in his commentary *In Tim*. 281; Runia and Share 2008: 132, where he also speaks of generation out of non-being (τὸ δὲ οὕτω γενητὸν καὶ ἐκ τοῦ μὴ ὄντος εἴποις ἂν προϊέναι). The Christian doctrine of creation is characterised by several additional claims, such as that there is a divine plan, that God creates out of love, that the world has a temporal beginning.
53 Maximus, *Amb. Io.* 7, PG 91: 1081a–b; Constas 2014: 100–101.
54 Maximus, *Amb. Io.* 10, PG 91: 1176d–1188c; Constas 2014: 284–309.
55 Plato, *Tim*. 27d–28a.
56 Plato, *Tim*. 28bc.
57 Plato, *Tim*. 30a.
58 Maximus, *Amb. Io.* 10, PG 91: 1176d–1177b; Constas 2014: 285–287.
59 Maximus, *Amb. Io*. 10, PG 91: 1177a; Constas 2014: 285–287.
60 Maximus, *Amb. Io.* 10, PG 91: 1177b–1181a; Constas 2014: 289–295.
61 Philoponus, *Contra Proclum* 236; Share 2005: 83.
62 Plato, *Tim*. 30ab.
63 Basil, *Hex*. 2.2, 148; Way 1983: 24.
64 Proclus, *In Tim.* 398–399; Runia and Share 2008: 273–275. Cf. note 381.
65 Sorabji 2004: 69.
66 For a summary of positions, see Sorabji 2004: 79–95.
67 Athanasius, *Contra Gentes and De Incarnatione*, edited and translated in Thomson 1971: 138–139.

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Part III

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7 Christ and Pythagoras

Augustine's early philosophy of number

Lars Fredrik Janby

In his works, we frequently find Augustine claiming that number has an important role in the organisation of the universe and that number is closely related to the immutable truths of God. Claims like these are found in a range of different contexts, related to subjects as seemingly disparate as aesthetics and Trinitarian thought. Augustine does however provide us with few systematic accounts of what number is, and any scholarly analysis of his philosophy of number requires drawing on several of his writings. This chapter contributes to our understanding of Augustine's philosophy of number by inquiring into some of its understudied aspects, related to how it developed in the early works. Through a diachronic study of a selection of Augustine's writings, the chapter discusses the evolution of his ideas about number on the backdrop of Pythagorean and Platonic traditions in Late Antiquity.

The chapter proceeds in three steps. First, I provide a background to Augustine's philosophy of number by sketching some differences between the Scriptural tradition and Hellenic philosophy with regard to number. When Augustine inquired into the nature of number, he integrated terms and conceptions that might be called Pythagorean, but which since long had become mainstream in other philosophical and religious movements in Late Antiquity, fusing them with both dogmatic and more idiosyncratic themes. Second, I examine how Augustine's philosophy of number originated in the first works written after his conversion in 386. To that effect, I compare the use of Pythagorean-Manichaean language in the lost treatise *De pulchro et apto* (as summarised in *Confessiones*) with the preface to *De ordine* and *Epistula* 3, which both appropriate Neoplatonic philosophy in explaining the relationship between unity and multiplicity, and between sensible and intelligible realities, articulating an understanding of number that effectuated a break with his former dualism. I will be particularly interested in the early concept of intelligible number, which enabled Augustine to explain the relationship between multiplicity and unity within a monistic system. Third, I enquire into the fortunes of Augustine's philosophy of number later in his career as a writer. It is plain that number received comparatively more attention in Augustine's early works, and that his interest in the concept seems to have diminished from the 390s, apparently coinciding with the increasing interest that he took in Scriptural interpretation in these years. While a complete survey of Augustine's later works

is far beyond the scope of this chapter, I propose to analyse *De libero arbitrio* 2 to discuss some aspects of the evolution of Augustine's thought with regard to his philosophy of number.

Christ and Pythagoras

When we encounter beliefs about number in early Christian writers, number is often (but not always) understood on the background of Biblical numerology, which is the knowledge of the hidden meanings of numbers that occur in Scripture. The philosophy of number that is the subject of this chapter belongs to a different tradition. It concerns the enquiry into the nature of number: what is number or how do we know number? The idea that number organises the universe is usually identified as Pythagorean, although Augustine largely adopted a philosophical discourse on number that had become mainstream in late ancient philosophy and religion.[1] Accordingly, Augustine's philosophy of number does not concern the hidden meaning of number associated with Biblical numerology, but the nature of number understood in the speculative sense that was rooted in ancient philosophy. This understanding of number emerged in the early phase of Augustine's career as a writer, in a period when his intellectual efforts were focused on acquiring philosophical knowledge of the faith.

But if modern scholarship readily discusses appropriations from Pythagoreanism and Platonism when analysing Augustine's rational enquiries into number, Augustine himself did perceive things differently. While it appears that his initial speculations into number had its origins in problems related to a philosophical discourse unrelated to Scripture, his philosophy of number did however soon forge a relationship with the Scriptural tradition. Throughout his works, we find Augustine claiming that not only is number ingrained in the very fabric of the world, it is also attested in Scripture. Far from tracing his understanding of number to traditions within Hellenic philosophy, he would frequently quote Biblical verses as proof-texts for the belief that number has a role in organising the universe. There are in particular two verses to which Augustine refers, Sap 11:21, "You have ordered everything in measure, number and weight," and Eccl 7:25, "So I turned my mind to understand and to investigate, and to seek out wisdom and number." In his exegesis of these verses, Augustine proceeds along the lines of Platonic-Pythagorean philosophy, understood as a rational enquiry into what number is. Scripture could in this way provide proof-texts for what at the time had become an important part of Augustine's thought, securing a Christian foothold for his philosophy of number. Based on the scriptural identification of Christ as the Wisdom of God, Augustine could with Eccl 7:25 even relate number to the second person of the Trinity, the Son.[2] It was at this intersection, we might perhaps say, that Christ could encounter Pythagoras in Augustine's thought, moulding Platonic-Pythagorean material within a Christian framework.

Scholarly studies have foregrounded the variety of contexts in which number appears in Augustine's early works. In an article, Christoph Horn has made a list of themes that Augustine relates to number: epistemological certainty, cosmological

order, aesthetics, ethics, education and symbolism.[3] While this seeming disparity makes it difficult to provide any synthesis, it is probably correct, as Horn points out, that it is the distinction between sensible and intelligible number that is the overarching point in Augustine's philosophy of number. This is because Augustine, in particular in the early works, was preoccupied with motivating his readers and dialogue partners to turn from sensible to intelligible realities. To that effect, the conceptual pair sensible and intelligible number would frequently be introduced in his texts as a proxy to facilitate the soul's turning around. Based on the evidence of his early works, this particular feature of Augustine's thought antedates the Scriptural proof-texts for number, suggesting that his philosophy of number has its origins external to the latter, and I have set myself the goal to examine these origins in the following.

Unity and multiplicity

In the works written by Augustine shortly after his conversion to Nicene Christianity in 386, we encounter the idea that number has an important role in structuring the universe. How can we explain the attraction of this idea to the mind of the recent convert? I will in this section focus on the origins of Augustine's philosophy of number, enquiring into the intellectual issues that occupied him in the very first writings. While Augustine's conversion has been subject of plenty of scholarly studies, I will here focus on the philosophy of number that pervades some of the early works in order to illustrate the shift of paradigm that took place in Augustine's intellectual life with the conversion, including the Neoplatonic backdrop that can be seen in his arguments on the cognition of unity in relationship to multiplicity.

In order to provide some background to the philosophy of number in Augustine's earliest works, let us first consider the lost aesthetic treatise *De pulchro et apto*, which Augustine composed in Carthage when he was 26 or 27 years old. According to the summary of the work presented in *Confessiones*,[4] Pythagorean concepts appear to have been familiar to Augustine prior to his encounter with Neoplatonism and the *libri platonicorum* in Milan and to his conversion in 386. The treatise dealt with the monad (*monas*) and dyad (*duas*) as two opposed principles, contrasted through the Manichaean worldview to which Augustine was committed at the time. Prompted by the question about the origin of evil, which troubled him in the early years, Augustine developed sympathies to the dualism of Manichaean, and the contrast between the monad and the dyad provided him with a dualistic explanation that relied on evil as a substance. He there claimed the monad to be the essence of virtue, the truth and the supreme good, while explaining evil as separation from unity, and caused by the dyad. The monad and the dyad were in that way conceived dualistically in accordance with Manichaean cosmology, in which good and evil were opposed substances. Although *De pulchro et apto*'s interpretation of the infinite dyad might have been Manichaean by origin, it still reflected a branch of Neopythagoreanism that held the infinite dyad to be the principle of evil. According to one tradition, Pythagoras had contrasted one

principle of the good and one principle of evil, corresponding to the monad and the infinite dyad.[5] In that respect, this particular branch of the Pythagorean tradition was in concord with the dualistic worldview of Manichaeanism. Regardless of which source they were transmitted from, Augustine's use of the two concepts monad and dyad shows that he was familiar with how number could organise reality prior to encountering Neoplatonic philosophy, and that it made sense to the Manichaean listener to describe the cosmic battle between good and evil as an opposition between the two Pythagorean principles of the monad and the dyad.

When we, in turn, proceed to the first works written by Augustine after his conversion in 386, we see a new paradigm for thinking about how number structures reality, including a new perspective on the cognition of unity and multiplicity. The preface to *De ordine* (1.1.1–1.2.3), written in Cassiciacum, provides us with a good starting point in this respect. While its preface sustains the problem of evil as a pressing question that requires a resolution, it introduces an approach that runs completely counter to the Manichaean doctrine that Augustine previously had been inclined to accept, reflecting the new perspective he had acquired with his conversion. In comparison, the preface shifts the problem of evil from the realities of this world to the cognitive abilities of human beings, as the Manichaean questioning of divine providence is turned into a charge against the human ability to grasp the providential order that God has imposed on the world. In a series of remarks, Augustine asserts the order which can be witnessed in all of creation (even the limbs of a flea are said to be shaped in due proportions!), and which he contrasts with the life of human beings, which is prone to error and confusion. With this analysis, a contrast is drawn between a world which is divinely ordered and a human, self-inflicted disorder. Accordingly, the problem of evil is accounted for as a product of human confusion, resulting from the failure to grasp the order in the world. This order, Augustine claims, consists in unity. He moreover provides an explanation for this failure, which he believes has to do with the senses. He argues that the senses only provide an incomplete perception of reality, which may give the false impression that creation is inordinate. According to the holistic argument he proceeds with, the senses are unable to process the multiple elements of which the world consists, failing to grasp the unity which pervades the universe. The point of departure for Augustine's intellectual enquiry into number was thus the ancient problem of explaining how the one relates to the many. Appropriating a Neoplatonic view of reality, *De ordine* describes the physical world as a realm of multiplicity and claims that there is a primary reality characterised by unity which precedes it, and on which it is dependent ontologically. Augustine posits the requirement that the soul returns to itself in order to acquire cognition of unity and retreats from the errors and multiplicity of the senses. This point is illustrated by the example of the circle and its centre, which is found in several of Plotinus' treatises.[6] The unity is the principle of orientation in the universe in the same manner as the centre is the starting point of the circle, Augustine claims.

Augustine's account of human cognition of multiplicity and unity in the preface to *De ordine* is echoed in the theory of number that is presented in *Epistula* 3, written in 387 shortly after the Cassiciacum dialogues. Prompted by his friend

Nebridius' claims about happiness, Augustine proceeds in the letter to enquire into the whereabouts of the happy life: where do we find happiness?[7] Happiness, it is indicated, necessitates valuing intelligible realities above things apprehended by the senses. Their respective values are mirrored in the difference Augustine draws between intelligible and sensible number. Sensible number is the quantity of corporeal things while intelligible number is the principle of multiplicity that generates the quantity of the physical world. Augustine explains that the physical world reflects intelligible realities, reflecting them as far as possible, albeit as a smaller image. In accordance with this stratification, there is also an important distinction in their properties. Whereas bodies in the sense world are susceptible to decreasing infinitely (i.e. can be divided into ever smaller parts) and have a limit to their increase, intelligible number can increase infinitely but not be reduced to less than the unit (*monadem*). The crux of the matter, however, is for Augustine to indicate that intelligible number reflects the riches of the mind, in contrast to the poverty associated with sensible number:

> This may perhaps be the reason why philosophers justly pronounce riches to be found in the things about which the understanding is exercised, and poverty in those things with which the senses have to do. For what is poorer than to be susceptible of endless diminution? And what more truly rich than to increase as much as you will, to go whither you will, to return when you will and as far as you will, and to have as the object of your love that which is large and cannot be made less? For whoever understands these numbers loves nothing so much as the unit (*monadem*); and no wonder, seeing that it is through it that all the other numbers can be loved by him.[8]

Number thus neatly illustrates the maxim of Augustine's early works, that of valuing intelligible realities above sensual pleasures. Leaving aside the letter's effort to locate the happy life in the realities contemplated by the mind, there is an intriguing understanding of unity and multiplicity here which attracts interest when compared to *De pulchro et apto*. First, there is the monad (*monas*), which, as in *De pulchro et apto*, is the principle of unity. But apart from that, there emerges in this letter a new paradigm for considering unity that reflects a view similar to what we find in Neoplatonic philosophy. In Plotinus, intelligible number is the principle of indeterminate multiplicity. Emanating from the infinite dyad's relationship to the monad, the Intellect is generated as the first level of multiple being. The dyad's activity is however not to be considered in the sense of an ill-fated separation from the monad, which is the view that we find in the Manichaean-Pythagorean doctrine illustrated in *De pulchro et apto*. The generation of the multiplicity of the Intellect still proceeds from the One, and in turn the multiplicity that we can observe in the universe can be traced to the generation of multiplicity in the Intellect. Augustine likewise now understood the multiple beings of the universe to reflect the multiplicity of intelligible number, which itself always remains grounded in the monad, if we are to follow the parlance of *Epistula* 3. Augustine is still intent on directing his readers toward what is

absolutely simple, but now within a framework that is monistic and assisted by a Neoplatonic explanation of multiplicity as number. Whereas *De pulchro et apto* conceived of separation from unity as the root of human misery, the letter appropriates a Neoplatonic view of reality and explains everything in the universe to be existing within the order of unity. Multiplicity, whether sensible or intelligible, is integrated into a monistic worldview in which evil is no longer a substance but instead located in the orientation of the human person. This comparison illustrates Augustine's intellectual and spiritual evolution from his Manichaean mindset to a monistic worldview that united a Christian affirmation of God's creation and Neoplatonic metaphysics.

A good example of Augustine's early philosophy of number can be found in his aesthetic reflections.[9] The aesthetic reflections in *De pulchro et apto* had been construed around number, and Augustine would continue along this line in the early works, although now based on new ideas on unity and its relationship to multiplicity. Invariably, Augustine's new aesthetic analyses hold beautiful things to be composites that display unity. Modifying classical aesthetical ideas in accordance with Neoplatonic philosophy, Augustine intends to prove how due proportions please us because they offer us a dim view of the unity that exists at a more primary level of reality. Corporeal beauty is subject to incorporeal beauty since corporeal numbers are subject to incorporeal numbers. But if human beings have pleasure in sensible unity, where that unity only is transient and imperfect (which it is because it is corporeal and composite), why not then instead find pleasure in eternal and perfect unity?[10] That is Augustine's challenge to anyone who finds pleasure in transient things. He here employs an explanatory strategy well-known from Neoplatonism, that of explaining one level of reality by reference to a more primary level, in this case explaining how composite and transient unity in the physical world imitates the simple and eternal unity that only the mind can contemplate. Based on his aesthetic analyses, Augustine's admonition would always be that of subjecting sensible pleasures to intelligible delights, and the numerical analysis of beauty proved to be expedient in applying his philosophy of number.

The cognition of number in later years

Having examined the origins of Augustine's philosophy of number, let us now consider its afterlife in his career as a writer. It is plain that number played an important role in Augustine's early thought, at a point of his intellectual life when he was intent on fostering a division between sensible and intelligible realities in accordance with the insights he had drawn from the *libri platonicorum*. Adopting Neoplatonic philosophy, Augustine considered that the multiplicity of the universe could be explained by reference to a primary principle of multiplicity, intelligible number, which yet also is characterised by its unity. As seen in the texts analysed above, Augustine held that there is a primary unity that can be contemplated by the mind but is unavailable to the senses, and he located the riches of the mind in the properties associated with intelligible numbers, which can increase infinitely but always remain grounded in the monad. The diagnosis generated by

this analysis consequently directed focus on the human mind and its failure to acquire cognition of unity. But how did this insight, which proved to be important within the intellectual context of Augustine's early thought, develop with time in his career as a writer? If Augustine first showed enthusiasm about the prospect of acquiring cognition of intelligible number, did he later make himself any expectations with regard to the human ability to acquire that knowledge?

The most prominent and by far more elaborate outcome of Augustine's diagnosis above is found in the ambitious encyclopaedic project that Augustine began in Cassiciacum in 386, and which he would continue until he abandoned it some time around becoming presbyter in Hippo Regius in 391. Writing a group of textbooks on the liberal arts, Augustine intended to demonstrate how the studies of the disciplines teach the soul to contemplate number, eventually leading to philosophy and the study of what unity is, if we are to follow the project sketch in *De ordine*.[11] The methodical progress of this demonstration was the ascent by degrees, a method which arrived to Augustine from his reading of the *libri platonicorum* (as narrated in *Confessiones* 7). The idea is eminently Platonic: to progress from visible to invisible realities by using mathematical numbers as proxies.[12] In the modification of the graded ascent that we find across the encyclopaedic works, Augustine would use studies in the liberal arts to effectuate a conversion of the soul from sensible to intelligible realities. These studies would habituate students with numbers and lead to the ultimate discovery that intelligible number is related to the immutable truth of God, thus transcending the human mind and facilitate cognition of the divine mysteries.

But while the early works by Augustine demonstrated an unmistakeable enthusiasm about number, to the extent that he planned on writing textbooks that would initiate students into the subject, his engagement with number did diminish with the years. Based on what we otherwise know of his life and career as a writer, we might surmise that this decline of interest can be traced to the more general change of priorities in Augustine's life in the 390s, as the philosophical framework of his early years was replaced with increased immersion in Scripture. The implications of this change of priorities should however not be exaggerated. Also in mature works like *De civitate Dei* and *De trinitate* we do find philosophical claims about number which, although less elaborate, echo insights from the early works.[13] Although Augustine would return to number throughout his career as a writer, it is evident that some of the early interest dwindled as also the outlook of his thought did go through transformations. In discussing these changes, I propose here to examine the comprehensive account Augustine gives of number in *De libero arbitrio* 2 in more detail. The book merits attention in this regard because it provides us with the example of a text that chronologically comes close to what commonly is held to be as a watershed in the evolution of Augustine's thought, composed after the encyclopaedic project and the early works, and close in time to his more intensified engagement with Scripture in the 390s and his office as presbyter in Hippo Regius (from 391).[14]

The immediate context of *De libero arbitrio* 2 is Augustine's proposition in the opening paragraphs of the book to establish a philosophical demonstration

of the existence of God, which, he tells his dialogue partner Evodius, should be understood also by rational means, and not only held by belief.[15] The demonstration largely reflects the strategy employed in the encyclopaedic project, as Augustine aims to guide Evodius from sense perceptions to the rational soul, finally enquiring into whether there exists something that is superior to the human mind. To that effect, he introduces number to demonstrate that there are incorporeal, eternal truths that are prior to the mind. Augustine assumes insights into number, including mathematical propositions, to be evident, and uses this as a foundation to show that the incorporeal, eternal truth of number is related to the incorporeal, eternal truth of God. By comparison, the encyclopaedic project had been staged as an ascent by degrees in which studies of the mathematicals would initiate into the intelligible truths of number, as Augustine held that studies of number could motivate the mind to turn its attention from sensible to intelligible realities. Likewise, in the context of the philosophical demonstration of God's existence in *De libero arbitrio* 2, Augustine uses number to demonstrate that the human mind is inferior to eternal truths which exist separately from itself.

De libero arbitrio 2 can in one sense be seen as a continuation of the logic of the project, since it maintains the pattern of an ascent by degrees, which demonstrates that number is superior to the human mind.[16] The aim of the encyclopaedic project outlined in *De ordine* had been to transport souls from the realities apprehended by the senses to the contemplation of intelligible number, and *De libero arbitrio* 2 more or less continues this line of thought. But while the encyclopaedic project basically had been structured around the same strategy in its demonstration of higher realities, Augustine, having abandoned the project and its ambitious learning process, would now limit himself to a simpler pedagogical model for explaining how number assists the mind in transcending the senses. At this point, Augustine evidently no longer saw any need to initiate his students into demanding studies of number in the liberal arts. Instead, he condensed the cognition of number into brief philosophical examples or lessons that he held to have the immediate evidence appropriate to prove the existence of incorporeal and eternal realities. Thus, although number carries much the same pedagogical role as in *De ordine*, the learning process is significantly abridged in *De libero arbitrio* 2. Instead of providing a vast curriculum of reading, number is introduced in far more succinct terms. What we encounter here is a continuation of the graded ascent through number, only without the disciplines. As such, the book reflects the development of Augustine's thought, as he with time saw no need to exercise the mind in erudite studies to learn what number is, while he did continue using number as an intermediary in transcending the human mind.

While *De libero arbitrio* 2 maintains that number is helpful in demonstrating the immutable truth that exists prior to the human mind (and even makes the association between number and Wisdom), it also provides us with passages that demonstrate Augustine's hesitancy about unravelling the nature of number. Can human beings acquire knowledge about intelligible number? In comparison, most Neoplatonists would think so, and Plotinus' *Ennead* VI.6 is paradigmatic as a Neoplatonic study of what number is. Augustine, however, seems more hesitant

in *De libero arbitrio* 2 about any such claim about the human ability of exploring the nature of number. In a revealing passage, Augustine claims that contemplation of number is exhausting:

> For when I reflect on the unchangeable truth of numbers and their lair (so to speak) and their inner sanctuary or realm – or any other suitable name we can find to refer to the dwelling-place and residence of numbers – I am far removed from the body. Perhaps I even find something to think about, but not something I could put into words. Eventually I return in exhaustion to familiar things, so that I am able to say something or other, and I talk in the usual way about the things right in front of me.[17]

This description of contemplative fatigue can with profit be compared with the well-known reports in *Confessiones* 7 of the graded ascents that had been prompted by his reading of the *libri platonicorum*. In the latter too, Augustine relays that following his graded ascents, he was unable to maintain his intellectual vision of the divine truth.[18] That vision had been acquired from following the Platonists' method, ascending from corporeal to incorporeal realities by using the soul as an intermediary – similarly to the method used in *De libero arbitrio* 2. The similarities between *Conf*. 7 and *Lib. arb*. 2 are non-trivial: the ascent from corporeal to incorporeal ends in an intellectual vision that ultimately "fails," as Augustine reports that he was unable to maintain the vision he had acquired, returning to ordinary life. In both texts the graded ascent ends in a vision of incorporeal realities that momentarily pulls the soul out of its habitual tasks, before the soul due to fatigue and weakness slips back into its former state. Does *De libero arbitrio* 2 anticipate the contemplative fatigue reported in *Confessiones* 7, or is it the other way around?[19] Either way, the analogy suggests that we should take the claim about contemplative exhaustion in earnest, underlining the dual experience that seems to be rooted in that vision of number.

In another passage (at *Lib. arb*. 2.11.32), Augustine admits to not knowing the exact relationship between Wisdom and number. Is number Wisdom or perhaps Wisdom number? Augustine appears unable to tell whether Wisdom and number are distinct from each other, or if the one is prior to the other. Far from representing an intellectual embarrassment to Augustine, however, he asserts that the issue is of no great concern. This concession of the irrelevance of determining their relationship is illustrative when comparing his enquiry into number to that of Plotinus. A task which would have occupied the Neoplatonist's mind, that of investigating the unfolding of number in the intelligible realm, is left unexamined by Augustine. Augustine's concession illustrates the limit he perceived to his philosophical enquiries into number. His aim was not that of examining the inner workings of Wisdom or number, which he felt confident that he could leave aside, but to use number as a proxy to demonstrate that the human mind is dependent on a primary reality. Again, the perhaps predominant use of number in Augustine is related to the conversion process, motivating the soul to turn from corporeal to incorporeal realities. Based on this, we should therefore perhaps not expect

Augustine to compose a treatise similar to that of Plotinus' *Ennead* VI.6, since his efforts are concentrated on the relationship between the soul and God rather than on any speculation about how number unfolds within the divine.

While a complete overview of the development of Augustine's philosophy of number is beyond the scope of this chapter, the analysis of *De libero arbitrio* 2 above foregrounds some of the characteristics of his engagement with number after the early works. Composed only a brief time after the abandonment of the encyclopaedic project, the book continues some of the line of thought that had been integral in his works on the liberal arts, to the extent that it maintained the graded ascent and the concept of intelligible number. It does however also show the limitations of Augustine's willingness to examine number, refraining from determining the relationship between number and Wisdom, and conceding the inability to put the vision of number into discursive philosophy. The context of the book as a whole moreover points to the new direction that Augustine's thought soon would take, as the book ends with the conclusion that any cognition of immutable truth is impossible if one does not purify the will. As Augustine later in the 390s intensified his reading of Scripture in enquiring into the will and developed his doctrine on divine grace, much of the framework of his early thought subsided and was supplanted by a new paradigm in which any cognition of number became even less relevant.

Conclusions

Augustine's philosophy of number originated from the intellectual problems that occupied the recent convert to Nicene Christianity in 386–387. Upholding that the senses prevent the soul from understanding the universe, Augustine appropriated insights from Neoplatonic philosophy to explain how the seemingly disordered multiplicity of the universe is derived from intelligible unity. Consequently, Augustine's attention turned to human cognition, which he repeatedly would admonish in his early writings to turn from sensible to intelligible realities. To this end, the distinction between sensible and intelligible number was expedient, as seen in *Epistula* 3, which located happiness in the properties of intelligible number. Augustine developed a strategy of converting souls through philosophical analyses of number for example in his aesthetic reflections, but more than anything in the short-lived encyclopaedic project.

Although Augustine's engagement with number never came to a complete end, it did decline, and I suggest that the explanation should be understood from the contextual changes of his life. Augustine's philosophy of number originated with the problems that occupied him in the early years. As Augustine's preoccupation with the discoveries that prompted his own intellectual evolution declined and new interests and priorities occupied his mind, number came to take a far more modest position in his intellectual life, although main insights would re-appear also in his more mature writings. Already *De libero arbitrio 2* can illustrate some of this waning interest in acquiring cognition of number, although it did identify number with Wisdom. The philosophy of number had attracted Augustine

because he was intent on explaining that the often confusing and multiple impressions of the senses did not reveal the unity of the universe, for which the concept of intelligible number provided him with helpful explanatory power in explaining unity and multiplicity. As this subject came to be of less urgency to Augustine's concern, he also lost some of his interest in the philosophy of number.

Notes

1 Solignac 1958 discusses some possible sources for Augustine's philosophy of number, highlighting the works of Nicomachus of Gerasa, whose *Introductio arithmetica* had been translated into Latin by Apuleius.
2 This is the argument in Augustine, *Lib. arb*. 2.
3 Horn 1994: 389–390.
4 Augustine, *Conf*. 4.13.20–4.15.27.
5 See for example Pseudo-Plutarch, *De Homero* 2.145.
6 Augustine, *De ordine* 1.2.3. Solignac 1957: 462–463 proposes *Enn*. VI.9.8 and VI.5.5 as sources.
7 For a wider discussion on happiness in Augustine, I refer to Ekenberg's chapter in this volume.
8 Augustine, *Ep*. 3.2; Schaff 1995: 221.
9 The aesthetics of Augustine has been covered in a number of scholarly studies, for example in Fontanier 2008.
10 Augustine, *De musica* 6.14.44 offers a powerful expression of this insight.
11 Augustine, *De ordine* 2.18.47–2.19.51.
12 While the issue is contested in scholarship, Hadot 2005 gives a convincing argument in favour of a Neoplatonic background for the encyclopaedic project.
13 Horn 1994: 407–414 provides an overview of texts in which Augustine considers number after 391.
14 The date of composition for *De libero arbitrio* 2 is disputed. See du Roy 1966: 236–238 for a discussion on the different dates of Augustine's editorial work on the book.
15 For a comprehensive analysis of the philosophy of mind in *De libero arbitrio* 2, see O'Daly 1987.
16 On the modifications of the ascents by degrees in Augustine's career as a writer, see van Fleteren 1974.
17 Augustine, *Lib. arb.* 2.11.30; King 2010: 54–55.
18 Augustine, *Conf*. 7.17.23.
19 This question is thoroughly discussed in Dobell 2009: 183–198.

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8 The impact of the Ὁμοούσιον on the divine ideas

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The kinship of Christianity and Platonism has often been noted,[1] yet this affinity has a complex and periodically perplexing nature. Origen, speaking to this relationship, notes: "But do not suppose me not to be suitably justified to the account of the Christians, in my reply to Celsus, to receive those philosophising about immortality or the continued existence of the soul, with whom we have certain things in common."[2] Likewise, Augustine observed the likeness of the two world-views when he noted, "if, therefore, Plato said that the wise person is the one who imitates, knows, and loves this God, and that one is blessed by participating in Him, what good is it to examine the other philosophers? None come closer to us than these."[3] Two points that bring Christians and Platonists closest is their polemic against both Gnosticism and Materialism.[4] Accordingly, this chapter will focus on the shared approach of both Christianity and Platonism in their polemic against materialism. In particular, the present chapter will lay out some examples of how both "schools" of thought turned to the concept of divine mind, that is the divine ideas (ἰδέας), as a way to repudiate materialism while, at the same time, guarding certain concepts, such as divine simplicity, which both traditions held as tantamount to their monotheism.

The divine ideas are, quite straight-forwardly, an antidote to materialism as the concept posits the ideas that undergird creation in a transcendent mind. This concept allows one to believe in a creating, providential God and divine perfection at the same time. The difficulty faced here is a familiar one: if God is perfect, then surely any change would be a form of putrefaction; or, if God is perfected by creation, one might quite rightly ask if this means that God was lacking something prior to creation. Similar questions might also arise around questions of providence: surely if God is perfect and unchanging, God would be neither reactive to, nor interactive with, creation. Nonetheless, the Scriptural tradition seems to make clear that God is mindful of humans; the author of Hebrews invokes the Psalms by asking "what is man that you are mindful of him, or the son of man that you should visit him?"[5] Likewise, the synoptic tradition will point out that even the hairs on one's head are numbered.[6] But what do these claims bring to bear on divine simplicity?

Divine exemplarism, i.e. *causa exemplaris*, or the divine ideas, manages to hold God's intimate care for and creation of the cosmos, both of which occur in

time, in line with the doctrine of divine simplicity by placing the ideas that constitute creation in the divine mind, which is outside of time. One might consider this an unfurling of that which is outside of time in time.[7] Thus, by placing the blueprint for creation in a supra-temporal divine mind, one allows for creation without corruption and providence without mutability on account of the fact that the unfolding of the divine plan does not come about through a change in the divine. This is to say that all of the fine-detail of creation is being thought eternally by the divine mind; and, to put it in Platonic parlance, the numbering of all the hairs on your head can be understood as forms of individuals.[8]

Yet, discussing the divine mind and placing the blueprint of creation therein, as history demonstrates, can be interpreted in a variety of ways.[9] While Plato is the first to most explicitly address the concept of divine exemplarism by means of the living model and Demiurge in his *Timaeus*, questions of how to interpret this account remain well into the third and fourth centuries *Anno Domini*. In particular, one finds two clearly delineated subjects in the account of creation in the *Timaeus* –raising the question: "how allegorically or literally should one read this myth?" The question for posterity became whether one should take the divine paradigm as something over against the divine mind, or whether one should understand the paradigm as something internal to the divine mind.

In what follows, the case will be made that both Christian and Platonic orthodoxy arrive at the same conclusion of positing the divine paradigm in the mind of God. This metaphysical parallel between Christian and Platonic orthodoxy will be laid out through paying close attention to the conclusions of both Plotinus (203–270) and Athanasius (296–373). Plotinus, here taken as a representative of Platonic orthodoxy, argued that the divine ideas are not outside the divine mind, a position that was laid out against the thought of his contemporary, Longinus, a fellow Platonist. Athanasius, on the other hand, is renowned for making the case, in distinction to the Arian position, that the Son is *homoousios* to the Father – a point which, when understood from the perspective of Son as *Logos*, can be seen as sharing many of the same concerns as Plotinus' point: that the ideas are not outside of divine *nous*. The commonalities that are to be laid out, it will be argued, can potentially be traced back to questions about how one is to relate the divine model to the divine mind in the *Timaeus*; the shared, allegorical, reading of this text by both Christian and Platonic orthodoxy is, furthermore, driven by shared commitments to both divine simplicity and a pure form of monotheism.

Plato and the *Timaeus*

Before addressing the passages of the *Timaeus* that are pivotal to reading the divine paradigm as either in the divine mind, or as a separate entity, it is important that one understand the methodology that allows for such variant readings. The *Timeaus*, one finds, is a *likely story*.[10] Plato himself seems to hint at the *likely* nature of the *Timaeus* by starting the dialogue with Socrates discovering an incomplete number of guests at the dinner party[11] – this could well be a way for

Plato to alert his reader to the fact that what is to follow is not a complete account of creation. Plato makes this point explicit at other points in the dialogue when he notes some points to be simply *what is likely*[12] and other points to be *probable*;[13] or, as Burnyeat would have it, "to be εἰκώς is an aspiration for Timaeus' μῦθος to live up to. It is not a foregone conclusion that his μῦθος will meet with success in the judgement of his audience."[14]

In addition to Plato's explicit appeals to the likely nature of his account, there are further points in the text that seem, likewise, to usher his reader towards an allegorical reading of his text. In particular, the amount of evidence one finds in favour of both high and low readings of the Demiurge points either to an author who is entirely unaware of the contradictions he is laying out or to an author who is pointing beyond the mere word of his text. In this instance, "high" and "low" readings of the Demiurge are being used as ways to relate the Demiurge to the Living Being. More specifically, in the myth of the *Timaeus* it appears that the Living Being ought to be held in a more primordial position than the Demiurge, for the Demiurge looks to the Eternal Living Being in order to create. Accordingly, a "low" reading of the Demiurge would separate the Demiurge from the living model and posit the living model as more primordial; a "high" reading of the Demiurge, on the other hand, would look to emphasise the similarity, if not the identicality, of the Demiurge and the Living Being.

Those who wish to hold a low understanding of the Demiurge will lean more on the passages of distinction. The foremost passage in the argument for distinction between the Demiurge and the Living Being would be the example of the craftsman looking to the eternal model and crafting the universe after it.[15] What is particularly pertinent to this example is that seeing requires distance. In other words, for the Demiurge to carry out the act of *looking* towards the eternal (πρὸς τὸ ἀίδιον ἔβλεπεν), he must stand apart from it. Plato writes elsewhere that the Demiurge is putting his hand to the work (ἐπεχείρησε) of fashioning the cosmos after the living model,[16] ensuring that there are the same kinds and quantities in the cosmos as there are in the Living Being.[17] These references suggest that there are three different entities in play: the Demiurge, the Living Being, and the created cosmos. As a testament to this, it seems that the Demiurge, in this particular reference expressed as Father, is so successful at creating the cosmos based on the paradigm found in the Living Being that the cosmos becomes a thing of joy (ἄγαλμα) to both himself and the gods.[18]

Despite the number of passages attesting to a "low" reading of the Demiurge, there is also sufficient evidence for a "high" reading. The "high" reading is based on passages that point to the Demiurge and the Living Being as one and the same. One key passage notes that the Demiurge, although creating on the basis of the Living Being, creates the world to be *as much like himself as possible*.[19] Not only is it the case that the cosmos is like the Demiurge, but the creation of the cosmos by the young gods is a task which *imitates* the Demiurge.[20] What is particularly unique about this is that μίμησις is normally understood in terms of a reflection of the paradigm, or Living Being, but here the imitation is of the Demiurge. While this passage intimates a deep interconnectedness between the Demiurge and the

Living Being, Plato's claim that soul is begotten "by he who is himself most excellent of all that is intelligible and eternal,"[21] puts the Demiurge's status as an intelligible entity beyond any doubt. That the Demiurge is intelligible is certainly a claim that makes one wish to associate the Demiurge with the Living being, but that the Demiurge is the *most excellent of all that is intelligible* puts the Demiurge in a very particular category of intelligibles. To offer a charitable reading to the high Demiurge camp one might call this particular idea the *idea of ideas*.

There are two particular points in the *Timaeus* itself that are worth accentuating in order to give a fuller voicing to the similarity between the Demiurge and the Living Being: the fact that each is both intelligible and eternal. The Demiurge, Plato notes, is both the best (ἀρίστου)[22] of the intelligibles and eternal (ἀεί τε ὄντων).[23] The Living Being, at times, is simply called the Eternal;[24] elsewhere, Plato notes the Living Being to be the Eternal Being.[25] Concerning intelligibility, Plato notes that the Demiurge looks to the Living Being *as thought perceives thought in the Living Being*.[26] All of this culminates in the conclusion that the Demiurge understands the Living Being in the same way that the Living Being understands itself.

The Demiurge's relationship to the Living Being would appear to be altogether unique insofar as the Demiurge is both a contemplator of the forms contained in the Living Being and an intelligible entity. Plato will, moreover, note the relationship between the Demiurge and the Living Being to be one of *nous* thinking about the ideas (νοῦς ἐνούσας ἰδέας).[27] Thus, with Plato himself establishing that the Demiurge is *nous* contemplating the ideas internal to the Living Being, the question begins to emerge more clearly: What is the Demiurge's relationship to the paradigm found in the Living Being? Are these two, clearly definable, entities, or does one take inspiration from Aristotle's point that thought ought to be identified with its object[28] and identify the Demiurge with the Living Being?

Philo

Philo of Alexandria (25 B.C.–50 A.D.), also known as Philo Judaeus, is a pivotal figure in the exposition of the divine ideas, much of his work squaring the Biblical and Platonic traditions with one another.[29] When it comes to the divine ideas, Philo's interpretation of the two differing creation accounts of Genesis 1–2 is crucial and his allegorical interpretation is deeply influenced by Platonism's divine exemplarism. Philo notes:

> For God, being God, anticipated that a beautiful imitation (μίμημα) would not come about apart from a beautiful paradigm, nor any of the perceptible (αἰσθητῶν) without fault, which was not modelled in respect of an archetype and *noetic* idea; God willed to create (δημιουργῆσαι) this visible (ὀρατὸν) cosmos, so he fore-modelled the *noetic* (νοητόν) cosmos, in order that he might consult a bodiless (ἀσωμάτῳ) and most deiform paradigm for the bodily world's completion, the newer creation being a copy of the older, containing as many perceptible (αἰσθητὰ) kinds as are *noetic* (νοητὰ) in that one.[30]

Thus, even though Philo is dealing with a Scriptural account of creation, he immediately employs divine exemplarism, basing the beauty here on a higher beauty "there."[31]

Philo's unique coalescing of the Biblical and Platonic traditions became tantamount to Christian "Logos" theology, a point that aids in explaining why the preservation of his works can be attributed to his Christian readership.[32] Philo's Logos subsumed the totality of the Platonic forms and is to be understood as the "incorporeal space of incorporeal ideas."[33] Philo makes the connection between the divine ideas and the Logos clear when he notes:

> Therefore, just as the fore-figured city in the mind of the architect did not have external space (χώρα), but it had been impressed on the soul of the craftsman, in the same fashion neither would the cosmos of ideas (ἰδεῶν) have another place than the divine Logos (θεῖον λόγον), which set these things in order.[34]

Philo's Logos and his cosmos of ideas is also noted as the "idea of ideas,"[35] a claim that seems to have added Aristotle's "thought thinking itself" to the *Timaeus*' creation account. Yet, this Logos would appear to be something created by God, rather than something that is of one essence with God.[36]

While the Logos is the place (χώρα) of ideas (ἰδεῶν), it does not appear to be proper (ἴδιος) to God. This Logos is God's creative aspect and the distinction between these two is made so strongly that it very much amounts to a second God.[37] In fact, Philo states quite explicitly that the simplicity of god is beyond the multiplicity of ideas.[38] Yet, what, for Philo, is simply a question of how God's creative aspect relates to the Supreme God can later be seen as a key to the Arian controversy. Williams points to this genealogy when he notes, "what is metaphor to Philo is literal description for Arius."[39]

Christian Alexandria – Clement and Origen

Philo, while warmly received by early Christians, needed to be received with slight modification in order to meet the emerging bar of orthodoxy. In this particular instance, Christians were able to warmly usher in the claim that the Logos is an incorporeal space of incorporeal ideas, but, the belief that this was a created Logos was not a claim that later Christians could follow.

While early Christians tend not to cite Philo, Clement is supremely clear in his appeals to Plato, allowing one to observe that he was a diligent reader of both the *Timaeus* and Genesis. Clement mentions Plato's understanding of the divine ideas approvingly when he notes, "Plato rightly says, 'that the man who devotes himself to the contemplation of ideas will live as a god among men; now the mind is the place of ideas, and God is mind.' He says that 'he who contemplates the unseen God lives as a god among men.'"[40] Likewise, when discussing Greek philosophy's plagiarism from the Hebrew tradition, Clement will note that "Barbarian philosophy," again (αὖθις), has an understanding of the world as an Archetype/Icon relationship, wherein a noetic paradigm informs

the aesthetic world[41]–"again," here, seeming to stress that this is yet another similarity.

The pinnacle of Clement's harmonising between the Hellenic and the Biblical traditions on creation can be found in the following passage, wherein it seems as if he could easily be talking about either tradition at any point:

> And, thus, Plato places the invisible (ἀόρατον) heaven and formless earth and *noetic* (νοητόν) light in the monad. For, "in the beginning" it says, "God created the heaven and the earth; and the earth was invisible," then, it follows: "and God said, 'let there be light,' and there was light." And in the perceptible cosmogony He creates the solid heaven (and the solid is perceptible [αἰσθητόν]) and both visible (ὁρατὴν) earth and light which is able to be seen (βλεπόμενον). Surely it seems to you that Plato, hence, has left the ideas of living beings in the *noetic* world and he has made the intelligible as visible forms according to their *genera*? Reasonably, then, Moses says the body to be formed from the earth, which Plato calls the earthly tabernacle, and the rational soul to be breathed into man's *persona* by God from above. Hence, therefore, they say the governing faculty is established, interpreting that which enters the soul through the senses into the first formed.[42]

While Clement is clear on the parallels drawn between Moses and Plato, Origen is clearer on how the divine ideas feature in the act of creation. Origen's clearest attestation to divine exemplarism is found in his *Commentary on John*, where he notes:

> For I think, just as a house and a ship are built or framed according to architects' plans, the *archē* of the house and of ship having their respective plans (τύπους) and reasons (λόγους) in the craftsman; thusly, all things come about according to the reasons (λόγους) made clear in advance by God in wisdom (σοφία), "for He made all things in wisdom." And it must be said, if I might say it thusly, that God made ensouled wisdom, He entrusted to her the moulding (πλάσιν) and the forms (εἴδη) for existence (οὖσι) and matter (ὕλῃ) from the plans (τύπων) which exist in her, but I stop short of saying if this is also their essences (οὐσίας). Thus, therefore, it is not difficult to say that, roughly, the *archē* of beings (ὄντων) is the Son of God, as it says, "I am the *archē* and the *telos*, the A and the Ω, the first and the last." But it is necessary to know that He Himself is not called the *archē* according to all that He is called.[43]

This example closely follows Philo's account of creation pre-existing in the mind of an architect and the divine Logos. Likewise, this is also a clear example of Origen harmonising the account of wisdom one finds in the Wisdom of Solomon and Proverbs with the *archē* of Genesis and the Johanine Prologue.

By playing on the dual meaning of "in the beginning," which one finds in the Greek ἐν ἀρχῇ and the Latin *in principio*, Origen is able to hold the notion of a

"principle" and chronological "beginning" in tension with one-another. This point is made explicit when Origen preaches on Genesis, "therefore, here, Scripture is not talking about any temporal *principium*, but '*in principio*,' that is in our Saviour, it says heaven and earth to exist, and all things which were made."[44] Likewise, in an appeal to Solomon's use of wisdom, Rufinus records Origen's note that every capacity (*virtus*) and form (*deformatio*) of creation exists in wisdom in a primary sense (*principaliter existunt*).[45]

Yet, for all the similarity Origen's world-view bears to the traditional account of divine exemplarism, he is careful to separate himself from the "Greek" position. After noting that Clement discusses another world and interpreting Jesus' saying, "I am not of this world,"[46] as more evidence that there is, indeed, another world, Origen notes:

> It is difficult for us to explain this other world, lest, by chance, it allowed some to think us to affirm certain "ideas" which the Greeks call ἰδέας. For assuredly it is foreign to us to speak of an incorporeal world, which consists solely of the phantasy of mind or the slippery realm of thoughts.[47]

Part of what makes this push back against the Greeks interesting is Rufinus' retention of the Greek word ἰδέας. This retention of the Greek in the Latin manuscript seems to follow Rufinus' habit of explaining the Greek he is translating to his Latin reader, something he did only a few lines earlier in this same section, when he notes, "that which in Latin we speak of as *mundus*, is called κόσμος in Greek."[48] Yet, commentators on this text prefer to attribute this repudiation of the ἰδέας to Origen, rather than Rufinus.[49]

The repudiation of the divine ideas in *De Principiis* takes on a different shape based on whose authorship it is attributed to. If one follows the suggestion of the commentators, that the repudiation is genuine Origen, then one seems to be left with two motivations for the assertion: 1) Origen wants to separate himself from "confessing" Platonists; 2) Origen is rebuking a specific understanding of the divine ideas, wherein the ideas are free-standing–this would be to say, in terms of Plato's Living Being, that the model and the thinker are separate. If one attributes the denial of the ἰδέας to the hand of Rufinus, however, the options seem to be that 1) Rufinus has added this passage in order to separate Origen from "the Greeks"; 2) a specific understanding of the divine ideas is being targeted; 3) Rufinus has added this passage in order to separate Origen from "the Greeks" and has elided a more questionable assertion; 4) Rufinus is simply explaining his translation.

It would seem that the strongest case for the rebuke of the divine ideas coming from the hand of Origen would be scenario two, where Origen is targeting a specific understanding of the divine ideas. It should be clear, up to now, that Origen does hold some conception of the divine ideas, so it would be out of place for something that is ubiquitous in his writing to be flatly rejected here. Scenario two, the rejection of a specific understanding of the divine ideas, would seem to be an idea that could well have come from Origen. Alternatively, if this is from

Rufinus, it could be understood as a clarification of Origen's position over against the position of certain Platonists, where the realm of "ἰδέας" is a free-standing thing, co-eternal with the Demiurge, creating two first principles, an unacceptable position for a monotheist.

Origen positioning himself against Platonists who do not place the model in the mind of the Demiurge is, in the truth of this manuscript tradition, a key development. It becomes an even more likely position when one considers that Origen moves from this repudiation to a further explanation of the "other world," appealing, yet again, to Clement as an authority. While this position would set Origen in line with "orthodox Platonism," there is one further development that is spelled out clearly in his *Commentary on Matthew*. During a discussion of divine judgement, Origen notes:

> But the truth does not hold it thusly; For, when God wishes suddenly to rekindle all the things which have come to pass in all time with respect to each individual in the memories of all (on behalf of each person's consciousness of his own deeds, good or bad), he would do so by his ineffable might (δυνάμει). Indeed, this is not as it is for us, when we wish to produce a memory of certain things, we require certain time for the passage of the things which have been said by us and bringing to mind the things which we wish to recall; thusly, God wills us to remember the things we have done in this life.[50]

Here, one finds Origen laying out the position that humans experience and remember that which comes to pass (τὰ γεγενημένα) in time, but that God sees and knows all at the same time. While this might seem to be a basic tenet of divine simplicity to the modern reader, one finds that Origen's contemporary Plotinus was arguing the same case in Platonic theology with regard to *nous*. Accordingly, holism at the level of ideas seems to flow naturally from Philo's term "the idea of ideas" (ἰδέα ἰδεῶν), an epithet which, Origen suggests, applies to the Son.[51] Thus, one should not be surprised when Origen notes that all of creation is the *technē* of supreme *nous*.[52]

Plotinus

While Dillon identifies the positing of the *Timaeus*' paradigm as the content of the intellect of the Logos with Antiochus, he notes that this position is contested by some.[53] It is, however, very clear that Plotinus holds that the ἰδέαι are internal to the intellect, a position one could call "platonic orthodoxy."[54] Plotinus' defence of the ideas being internal to the intellect, as laid out in *Enn*. V.5., is set out in opposition to Longinus' belief that the paradigm is posterior to, and thus separate from, the Demiurge.[55]

The core of Plotinus' claim that *nous* shares its identity with its objects is that this identity is what gives *nous* its truth-claim. While it is true that intellect must always think itself,[56] it must do so in a non-discursive manner. The problem, for

Plotinus, of positing the intelligibles outside of the divine mind is that the relationship of mind to intelligibles would then be one akin to sensation,[57] not reflection.[58] If *nous* is taken to interact with the intelligibles as externals, Plotinus avers, it would be forced to operate *diachronically*,[59] a characteristic of Soul rather than *nous*.[60] Thus, characteristic of *nous*' non-discursive nature and shared identity with the intelligibles, Plotinus will note *nous* to be whole everywhere and to *possess* all,[61] what one might call the holism of the intellect.[62]

Plotinus' identification of the Living Being with the Demiurge and the consequent holism of the intellect is more than mere anti-Longinian polemic, instead it is the firm foundation upon which this world of flux stands. Since *nous* constantly contemplates all the forms and holds them as internal to itself, it is present to all existence.[63] Moreover, Plotinus describes providence as existence in accordance with *nous* (κατὰ νοῦν).[64] Thus, the world can be seen as having its existence and intelligibility on account of *nous*' contemplation. Consequently, Plotinus can also be understood as explaining the "existence of mind" by explaining matter's existence from mind, rather than mind's existence as something developing from matter.

Athanasius

With the existence of divine exemplarism as Christian Alexandria demonstrated, the question of how members of the Trinity relate to each other remains to be properly broached. To this end, it might be worth noting Origen's reflection on this relationship for a pre-Nicaean perspective. Origen notes in his *Commentary on John*:

> And I ask if it is the case that God is glorified beyond the glorification in the Son; as we explained, He himself is exceedingly more glorified when He is engaged in the contemplation (περιωπῇ) of Himself, according to the knowledge and *theōria* of Himself, which is greater than the *theōria* in the Son. Thus, one must think in such a way concerning God, that it is necessary to say that He is gladdened (εὐφραίνεται) with a certain unutterable satisfaction and gladness and joy (εὐφροσύνην καὶ χαράν), by himself.[65]

From this passage, the seeming difference in function between Father and Son is of particular importance. In contrast to this passage, later thinkers will note that the oneness of essence (οὐσία) leads to the oneness of activity (ἐνέργεια).[66] On this latter reading, it would seem to rule out the Father's self-contemplation as giving more glory to Himself than the Son's contemplation of Him, because the two hypostases are one in essence.[67] Perhaps Origen's note that the Father and the Son have different contemplative abilities can be accounted for by Origen's claim, in the same work, that the Son is not from the essence of the Father.[68]

With Stead's note that the Father is more exalted than the Son in Origen's thought,[69] Origen's position seems to tend towards the Arian position of a Trinity of unequal glories.[70] Yet, the unequal glories follow naturally from the Father and

Son being *essentially* different, the Arian position.[71] One begins to discern the biggest metaphysical difference between the Arian position and that of Christian and Platonic orthodoxy when one considers that, for Arians, the Son is ignorant of Himself,[72] an ignorance which seems to come about on account of the fact that the Logos only exists by participation in, and obedience to, the Father.[73]

Until this point, the Logos has played the pivotal role of undergirding all of creation as the "idea of ideas"[74]–one might also wish to express the "idea of ideas" as the "thought of thought,"[75] a rather self-reflective and clearly intelligible status – but, the Arian position that the Son is ignorant of himself seems to fall considerably short of being *pure reflection*. While the Arian Logos is still understood to be the intelligible structure of the world,[76] it has an existence that is purely participatory and obedient, rendering the Logos' rationality purely participatory and not proper to it. This establishes the Logos as a mediator for creation, rather than its own hypostasis within the Godhead, a position which develops into a "practical polytheism."[77]

Thus, the Creed's *homoousion* ensures not only the divinity of the Logos, but it enshrines the role of the Logos in creation, as the Logos is proper to, not a participant in, the Godhead. Athanasius makes clear the divinity and centrality of the Logos in creation when he notes "that God, being Maker (ποιητὴς), also has the creative Word (δημιουργικὸν λόγον), not as external, but proper to Himself (οὐκ ἔξωθεν, ἀλλ' ἴδιον ἑαυτοῦ)."[78] The language of being "proper to" stands as a clear way to denote the Son's status, for, unlike the rest of creation, which *participates* in God, the Son is *proper* (ἴδιος) to the Father.[79] As will be demonstrated below, the language of the Son being "proper" to the Father is an explicit claim that the Son is proper to the Father's essence, making clear that Father and Son are *homoousios*.

The properness of the Son to the Father's essence seems to modify the functional relationship of Father and Son from the one noted above, wherein the Father is capable of giving Himself more glory than the Son is. Athanasius seems to provide a corrective to this earlier position as a corollary to his claim that the knowledge of Father and Son is one knowledge (μία γνῶσις), Athanasius stating:

> For one is the knowledge of the Father through the Son and of the Son from the Father, and the Father delights in him and, with that same joy, the Son rejoices in the Father (τῇ χαρᾷ ταύτῃ εὐφραίνεται ἐν τῷ πατρὶ ὁ υἱὸς) . . . and again these things show the Son not to be alien, but proper to the Father's essence (ἴδιον τῆς τοῦ πατρὸς οὐσίας).[80]

It does not seem out of place to suggest that the rejoicing and joy (εὐφροσύνη and χαρά) found in this passage, which is the same for Father and Son and instigated by their being of one knowledge, stands as a corrective to Origen's unequal glorification found in the Trinity's self-contemplation, where the Father's self-contemplation gives Him more joy (εὐφροσύνη and χαρά), than the Son's contemplation of Him.

Thus, having made explicit various aspects of Athanasius' claim that the Son, or Logos, is proper to the Father's essence, or *homoousios*, the identification of the Logos with the realm of the ideas remains. This point, however, will be made as the culminating point within a series of three points that demonstrate how the *homoousion* impacts the divine ideas. These three points are as follows: first, that the discussion about the Son is fully applicable to the Logos; second, that this Logos has a clear role in framing and ordering creation; third, that the intelligibles are seen to have a demonstrable existence in the Logos, meaning that whether or not the Logos is divine directly impacts whether or not the intelligibles are internal or external to the Godhead.

While one finds that it is the Logos that is the only begotten from the Father (ὡς μονογενοῦς παρὰ πατρός) in the Johanine Prologue,[81] this is not an explicit connection between the Logos and the Son. Athanasius clearly felt it necessary to make this connection more explicit when writing *De Decretis*, for at one point he parallels an argument for the Son being from God's essence with an argument for the Logos being from God's essence.

> For the Fathers believed it to be the same thing to say that the Logos is from God and to say that it is from the *ousia* of God; since, likewise, the word "God" signifies nothing else than the *ousia* of Him Who Is, in accordance with what I have already been saying. Thus, therefore, if the Logos is not from God, as the Son would, by nature, be genuinely from the Father, but as the created entities (κτίσματα) because they are said to be fabricated (τὸ δεδημιουργῆσθαι), He (the Son) also would be from God as all things – neither from (ἐκ) the *ousia* of the Father nor by (κατ') *ousia* would this same Son be Son, but from virtue (ἀρετῆς), just as we, who are called sons according to grace, are called sons.[82]

Thus, one can clearly see the line Athanasius is drawing between the divinity of the Son and the divinity of the Logos. The pivotal claim being that the Logos is from God in the same manner as the Son, so if the Logos is not genuinely (γνήσιος) from God's essence, neither is the Son. This results in the Logos being of the same essence (ὁμοούσιος) with the Father in exactly the same manner as the Son is.

While the Logos' involvement in the creative process is intimated by the term "creative Word," it is also a point that Athanasius makes clear when he explains that the Son has a *demiurgic* role in creation and that, on account of this, the Son *qua* Demiurge must have a different origin than that which he fashions. Athanasius reasons as follows:

> And, therefore, the Apostle asserts "and one lord Jesus Christ, through whom all things" (1 Cor 8:6), in order that he might remove the Son from "all things," for all these things which are said to be "from God" came about through the Son and it is not possible for that which is crafted (δημιουργούμενα) to have

> the same (ὁμοίαν) beginning (γένεσιν) as the crafter (δημιουργοῦντι), and in order that he might teach that which is here called the same "from God" signifies something different concerning created things than it does when it is considered as it is said concerning the Son.[83]

Thus, Athanasius understands Paul's "and one lord Jesus Christ, through whom all things" as a way of separating the Son from created being (τὰ πάντα). While Athanasius' point that the creator (δημιουργοῦντι) must have a different origin (γένεσις) than the things which he crafts (δημιουργούμενα) is being made in order to reinforce the Son's divinity, it is important to this chapter's purposes that one bears in mind that Athanasius is making this point through emphasising the Son's involvement in the creative process. Thus, if one takes Athanasius as following Origen's example of applying Philo's notion about the Logos as the "idea of ideas" to the Son,[84] then it would appear that the above cited text points to Plato's Living Being, that is the paradigm or the ideas, coinciding with the Demiurge.

While one could argue contextually for the intelligibles belonging to the Logos, for one cannot doubt the importance of Irenaeus for understanding Athanasius' thought[85] and it is clear that Irenaeus discusses both the divine ideas[86] and discusses the Logos as God's cogitation,[87] this point can also be made from Athanasius' own writings. In compliment to the role that the intelligibles play in the creation of the world, some of Athanasius' strongest language about the intelligibles occurs in his discussion of the soul's individual journey. One could even, perhaps, describe Athanasius' understanding of the fall as a fall away from divine contemplation: Athanasius noting, "they fell into their own desire, preferring their own (τὰ ἴδια) over contemplation (θεωρίας) in accordance with the divine intelligibles (τὰ θεῖα)."[88] As much as one contemplates the intelligibles, one might also say that such contemplation is of the Logos: Athanasius notes, concerning the human in his prelapsarian state, "he has not one obstacle to the knowledge of the Divine, thus he always beholds (θεωρεῖ), through his pureness, the icon of the Father, God the Logos, according to whose image he was made."[89] Moreover, it would appear that the intelligibles are central to contemplation; it is said of Adam that, "The Holy Scriptures say he had his *nous* God-ward, according to the beginning, without shame and with boldness (παρρησίᾳ), and it was joined with the saints in the contemplation of the intelligibles (νοητῶν)."[90] One might wish to note that Athanasius' discussion of a lapse from intellectual to carnal is prefigured in Origen.[91]

Thus, it would appear that the intelligibles have their home in the Logos, demonstrating the way in which the Logos is the idea of ideas. Athanasius reaffirms the relationship of the Logos to the divine intelligibles when he connects one's observation of the Logos' providence to the joining of oneself to the intelligibles as follows:

> And the one who observes the providence which, through the Logos, extends to the universe is astonished, being, on the one hand, raised above the sensible (αἰσθητῶν) and all bodily *phantasia*, while, on the other hand, he is

> joined (συναπτόμενος) to the divine intelligibles (θεῖα νοητὰ) in the heavens by the power of *nous*.[92]

Accordingly, the one who is properly said to observe the Logos' providence at work in the cosmos is said to be joined to the divine intelligibles, these intelligibles undergirding the very *phantasiai* through which they are mediated. This is to say that the Logos extends to all creation through the divine intelligibles, allowing Athanasius to assert that nothing is bereft of the Logos.[93] One might wish to note that in such a schema the way up is the same as the way down; this is to say that just as Athanasius characterises the fall as one from contemplation of the divine intelligibles to sensible realities, similarly the return to the contemplation of the intelligibles is achieved by going through and, ultimately, transcending the sensible world.[94]

Thus, it would appear that by arguing for the Son's essential identity with the Father, an identity which is also applied to the Logos, Athanasius is also making a claim about the intelligibles. It is, moreover, very clear that the Logos ought to be understood as the Creative Word (δημιουργικὸς λόγος), holding an integral role in the act of creation. That the Logos is the place of the intelligibles is made clearest when Athanasius talks about the individual's fall away from and reversion to the contemplation of the intelligibles. Yet, part of what allows the intelligibles to be identified with the Logos is the fact that the divine intelligibles (θεῖα νοητά) are understood to undergird all of the sensible (αἰσθητῶν), allowing one to move beyond the sensible and to be joined with (συναπτόμενος) the intelligibles in one's perception of the Logos in, and throughout, the world. Thus, the identification of the Son with the Father can be seen to have the same metaphysical impact as the Living Being's identification with the Demiurge in the *Timaean* myth, each identification combining that which undergirds the logical structure of reality with the creator, guarding against the "practical polytheism" of two creative principles.

Conclusion

The divine ideas constitute a tenet shared between Christian and Platonic orthodoxy, particularly when expressed in terms of anti-materialism and in defence of divine simplicity. The divine ideas allow creation to be seen as a temporal reflection of an a-temporal archetype, this archetype being the basis for both the cosmos' existence and intelligibility, without imputing change to the divine. Moreover, by starting the account of creation from divine mind, one is not left with the question of how mind emerges from matter, but instead the question is how matter emerges from mind – the divine mind standing as the basis for the human mind.

While there are some obvious incongruencies between Christianity and Platonism – such as the incarnation or whether Father, Son, and Spirit are supposed to relate to the three hypostases of One, *Nous*, and Soul, or simply to the "thinking, thinking, thinking" of *Nous*–the two traditions share not only a belief in the divine mind, but in many cases a belief in the forms of individuals. Maximus the Confessor is one prominent example of the continuation of the divine

exemplarist tradition, his doctrine of the "*logoi* of being" (οἱ λόγοι τοῦ εἶναι)[95] noting God to possess all the *logoi* of being prior to creation. Thus, despite Newman's suggestion that Platonism is to blame for Arius' errors,[96] it has been demonstrated herein that it is not Platonism *in toto*, but a specific form of Platonism with a free-standing paradigm that can be traced to Arius – but this belief never became orthodox Platonism.

The similarity demonstrated in this chapter is borne out of two monotheistic "schools" of thought, each of which has a commitment to divine simplicity and each of which appeals to God as *causa exemplaris* in order to justify creation whilst still maintaining this commitment. From their shared monotheism, both orthodox Christianity and Platonism maintain that the archetype of creation is internal to the highest principle, not something over against the first principle: for a paradigm that is independent of the creative principle would result in a "practical polytheism." Accordingly, by embracing divine exemplarism in this manner, these two "schools" of thought are able to understand the cosmos as a living image of the divine. Not only this, but by standing firm in the claim that the world is made as a reflection of the highest principle, both "schools" are able to claim that this is the best possible world. Thus, this world of flux is bestowed intelligibility and order by being held ever present in the divine mind.

Notes

1 E.g. Beierwaltes 2014.
2 Origen, *C. Cels*. III.81.1–4: "Μὴ ὑπολάβῃς δέ με οὐχ ἁρμοζόντως τῷ Χριστιανῶν λόγῳ παρειληφέναι πρὸς τὸν Κέλσον τοὺς περὶ τῆς ἀθανασίας ἢ τῆς ἐπιδιαμονῆς τῆς ψυχῆς φιλοσοφήσαντας· πρὸς οὓς κοινά τινα ἔχοντες." All translations are the author's own.
3 Augustine, *Civ. Dei* 8.5: "Si ergo Plato Dei huius imitatorem cognitorem amatorem dixit esse sapientem, cuius participatione sit beatus, quid opus est excutere ceteros? Nulli nobis quam isti propius accesserunt." Likewise, Simplicianus congratulates Augustine on reading the Platonists and not falling into the writings of other philosophers (cf. Augustine, *Conf*. VIII.2.3).
4 One can find the Christian Platonist agreement against materialism in Kenney 2016: 13. Also, Gerson makes the case for anti-materialism being a core tenet of Platonism in his account of 'Ur-Platonism', in Gerson 2017: 10–11.
5 Heb 2:6; cf. Ps 8:5 (LXX).
6 Mt 10:30; Lk 12:7.
7 Plotinus, *Enn*. IV.3.5, 10: ἐξειλιγμέναι.
8 Plotinus, *Enn.* V.5.
9 Speusippus and Xenocrates maintained that the process described in the *Timaeus* was both timeless and eternal, pointing to a more allegorical and less wooden reading. Most Platonists, except for Plutarch and Atticus, followed this reading, see Dillon 1996: 7. For more on this, see also Meijering 1968: 140.
10 As noted by Zeyl in his introduction to his translation, Zeyl 1997: 1225.
11 Plato, *Tim*. 17a1–3: "εἷς, δύο, τρεῖς: ὁ δὲ δὴ τέταρτος ἡμῖν, ὦ φίλε Τίμαιε, ποῦ τῶν χθὲς μὲν δαιτυμόνων, τὰ νῦν δὲ ἑστιατόρων".
12 Plato, *Tim.* 48d6: "τὸ τῶν εἰκότων δόγμα." Burnyeat points out that English has lost the link between "likely" and "likeness" and that it would perhaps be better to choose an adjective such as "appropriate," "fitting," "fair," "natural," or "reasonable" as a translation of εἰκώς, cf. Burnyeat 2005: 146.
13 Plato, *Tim*. 55d5: "κατὰ τὸν εἰκότα λόγον."

14 Burnyeat 2005: 155–156. Burnyeat also notes the thrust behind Timaeus' speech to be the rationality that underlies all creation: "I conclude that the exegesis Timaeus will offer is precisely an exegesis, explanation, exposition, or revelation of the rationality embodied by the Maker in the cosmos he produced"; also note "In the *Timaeus* the Creator is presented in a human way: he sees certain things, he wants, and he does certain things. The *Timaeus* is represented as a myth, therefore these expressions should not be taken literally, but it is at least significant that Plato, when the λόγος fails and he takes refuge in the μῦθος, uses these personal categories", Meijering 1968: 140.
15 Plato, *Tim*. 29a2–3: "εἰ μὲν δὴ καλός ἐστιν ὅδε ὁ κόσμος ὅ τε δημιουργὸς ἀγαθός, δῆλον ὡς *πρὸς τὸ ἀίδιον ἔβλεπεν*."
16 Plato, *Tim*. 37d1–2: "καθάπερ οὖν αὐτὸ τυγχάνει ζῷον ἀίδιον ὄν, καὶ τόδε τὸ πᾶν οὕτως εἰς δύναμιν ἐπεχείρησε τοιοῦτον ἀποτελεῖν."
17 Plato, *Tim.* 39e6–9: "τοῦτο δὴ τὸ κατάλοιπον ἀπηργάζετο αὐτοῦ πρὸς τὴν τοῦ παραδείγματος ἀποτυπούμενος φύσιν. ἦπερ οὖν νοῦς ἐνούσας ἰδέας τῷ ὅ ἔστιν ζῷον, οἷαί τε ἔνεισι καὶ ὅσαι, καθορᾷ, τοιαύτας καὶ τοσαύτας διενοήθη δεῖν καὶ τόδε σχεῖν."
18 Plato, *Tim*. 37c6–37d1: "ὡς δὲ κινηθὲν αὐτὸ καὶ ζῶν ἐνόησεν τῶν ἀιδίων θεῶν γεγονὸς ἄγαλμα ὁ γεννήσας πατήρ, ἠγάσθη τε καὶ εὐφρανθεὶς ἔτι δὴ μᾶλλον ὅμοιον πρὸς τὸ παράδειγμα ἐπενόησεν ἀπεργάσασθαι." Note the word-play here with ἄγαλμα and ἠγάσθη, the latter of these two coming from ἄγαμαι.
19 Plato, *Tim.* 29e1–3: "ἀγαθὸς ἦν, ἀγαθῷ δὲ οὐδεὶς περὶ οὐδενὸς οὐδέποτε ἐγγίγνεται φθόνος: τούτου δ' ἐκτὸς ὢν πάντα ὅτι μάλιστα ἐβουλήθη γενέσθαι παραπλήσια ἑαυτῷ."
20 Plato, *Tim.* 42e7–8: "καὶ λαβόντες ἀθάνατον ἀρχὴν θνητοῦ ζῴου, μιμούμενοι τὸν σφέτερον δημιουργόν."
21 Plato, *Tim.* 37a1–2: "τῶν νοητῶν ἀεί τε ὄντων ὑπὸ τοῦ ἀρίστου ἀρίστη γενομένη [refers back to ψυχή] τῶν γεννηθέντων."
22 Plato, *Tim.* 37a.
23 Plato, *Tim.* 37a1: "νοητῶν ἀεί τε ὄντων."
24 Plato, *Tim*. 29a3: "πρὸς τὸ ἀίδιον ἔβλεπεν."
25 Plato, *Tim*. 37d1: "ζῷον ἀίδιον."
26 Plato, *Tim*. 39e7–8: "ἦπερ οὖν νοῦς ἐνούσας ἰδέας τῷ ὅ ἔστιν ζῷον."
27 It does not seem much of a stretch for one to move from "νοῦς ἐνούσας ἰδέας" (*Tim.* 39e) to "νόησις νοήσεως νόησις", in Aristotle, *Met.* Λ, 9: 1074b 33–34.
28 Aristotle, *De anima* III.4, 429a13–18.
29 Dillon 1996: 141.
30 Philo, *Opif.* 16: "προλαβὼν γὰρ ὁ θεὸς ἅτε θεὸς ὅτι μίμημα καλὸν οὐκ ἄν ποτε γένοιτο δίχα καλοῦ παραδείγματος οὐδέ τι τῶν αἰσθητῶν ἀνυπαίτιον, ὃ μὴ πρὸς ἀρχέτυπον καὶ νοητὴν ἰδέαν ἀπεικονίσθη, βουληθεὶς τὸν ὁρατὸν κόσμον τουτονὶ δημιουργῆσαι προεξετύπου τὸν νοητόν, ἵνα χρώμενος ἀσωμάτῳ καὶ θεοειδεστάτῳ παραδείγματι τὸν σωματικὸν ἀπεργάσηται, πρεσβυτέρου νεώτερον ἀπεικόνισμα, τοσαῦτα περιέξοντα αἰσθητὰ γένη ὅσαπερ ἐν ἐκείνῳ νοητά."
31 The claim of Philo "τοσαῦτα περιέξοντα αἰσθητὰ γένη ὅσαπερ ἐν ἐκείνῳ νοητά" (Philo, *Opif.* 16), reminds the reader of Plato, *Tim.* 39e8–9: "οἷαί τε ἔνεισι καὶ ὅσαι, καθορᾷ, τοιαύτας καὶ τοσαύτας διενοήθη δεῖν καὶ τόδε σχεῖν."
32 Louth 2007: 17.
33 Wolfson 1947: 193.
34 Philo, *Opif.* 20: "καθάπερ οὖν ἡ ἐν τῷ ἀρχιτεκτονικῷ προδιατυπωθεῖσα πόλις χώραν ἐκτὸς οὐκ εἶχεν, ἀλλ' ἐνεσφράγιστο τῇ τοῦ τεχνίτου ψυχῇ, τὸν αὐτὸν τρόπον οὐδ' ὁ ἐκ τῶν ἰδεῶν κόσμος ἄλλον ἂν ἔχοι τόπον ἢ τὸν θεῖον λόγον τὸν ταῦτα διακοσμήσαντα."
35 Philo, *Opif*. 6.25; Philo, *Migr*. 18.103; Cf. Wolfson 1947: 204 and 233; this mind is also the basis of the human mind, cf. Philo, *Opif.* 69.
36 Philo, *Opif.* 16: "Βουληθεὶς τὸν ὁρατὸν κόσμον τουτονὶ *δημιουργῆσαι*, προεξετύπου τὸν νοητόν"; *Opif.* 29: "Πρῶτον οὖν ὁ ποιῶν *ἐποίησεν* οὐρανὸν ἀσώματον καὶ γῆν ἀόρατον, καὶ ἀέρος ἰδέαν, καὶ κενοῦ." Both of these citations point very clearly to God's *creation* of the intelligible world.

37 Cf. Dillon 1996: 367; "Even those Platonists who do not adopt a distinction between two gods (Supreme God and Demiurge), such as Philo, Plutarch or Atticus, make a strong distinction between God and his Logos, which amounts to very much the same thing."
38 Philo, *Leg. All*. III.33; *Immut*. 24.
39 Williams 1987: 122.
40 Clement, *Str.* IV.25.155.2: "εἰκότως οὖν καὶ Πλάτων τὸν τῶν ἰδεῶν θεωρητικὸν θεὸν ἐν ἀνθρώποις ζήσεσθαί φησι· νοῦς δὲ χώρα ἰδεῶν, νοῦς δὲ ὁ θεός. τὸν <οὖν> ἀοράτου θεοῦ θεωρητικὸν θεὸν ἐν ἀνθρώποις ζῶντα εἴρηκεν."
41 Clement, *Str.* V.14.39.3.
42 Clement, *Str.* V.14.93.5–94.4: "καὶ ἐν μὲν τῇ μονάδι συνίστησιν οὐρανὸν ἀόρατον καὶ γῆν ἀειδῆ καὶ φῶς νοητόν· «ἐν ἀρχῇ» γάρ φησιν «ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν· ἡ δὲ γῆ ἦν ἀόρατος.» εἶτ' ἐπιφέρει· «καὶ εἶπεν ὁ θεός· γενηθήτω φῶς· καὶ ἐγένετο φῶς.» ἐν δὲ τῇ κοσμογονίᾳ τῇ αἰσθητῇ στερεὸν οὐρανὸν δημιουργεῖ (τὸ δὲ στερεὸν αἰσθητόν) γῆν τε ὁρατὴν καὶ φῶς βλεπόμενον. ἆρ' οὐ δοκεῖ σοι ἐντεῦθεν ὁ Πλάτων ζῴων ἰδέας ἐν τῷ νοητῷ ἀπολείπειν κόσμῳ καὶ τὰ εἴδη τὰ αἰσθητὰ κατὰ γένη δημιουργεῖν τὰ νοητά; εἰκότως ἄρα ἐκ γῆς μὲν τὸ σῶμα διαπλάττεσθαι λέγει ὁ Μωυσῆς, ὃ γήινόν φησιν ὁ Πλάτων σκῆνος, ψυχὴν δὲ τὴν λογικὴν ἄνωθεν ἐμπνευσθῆναι ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ εἰς πρόσωπον. ἐνταῦθα γὰρ τὸ ἡγεμονικὸν ἰδρῦσθαι λέγουσι, τὴν διὰ τῶν αἰσθητηρίων ἐπείσοδον τῆς ψυχῆς ἐπὶ τοῦ πρωτοπλάστου [εἴσοδον] ἑρμηνεύοντες." This translation assumes Clement's use of ἐπείσοδον mentioned in the last sentence of this citation is resuming the theme of watchfulness (φυλακῆς [*Str.* V.14.93.3]), addressed in the last sentence of the section immediately preceding it in the treatise. Here, by noting the interpretation of that which enters the soul, Clement appears to be resuming his theme of watchfulness in preparation for his next section, which is more clearly about anthropology, where he will tie image and likeness language from Genesis to λόγος and νοῦς. Accordingly, this passage can be seen as doing a great deal of philosophical and anthropological work. Philosophically, Clement can be seen as using the divine mind as justification for the existence of human mind, a point made by Philo (*Opif.* 69). Anthropologically, Clement's appeal to the "first formed" seems to be a discussion of the inner-man, placing him squarely in line with Philo's account of double creation (*Opif.* 134). Origen, likewise, can be seen as an inheritor of this doctrine (*Hom. in Gen*. I.2; *C. Cels.* VI.63; *Dial. Her*. 11.19–20). Moreover, this paragraph makes very clear that the ἡγεμονικόν oversees that which enters one's soul, establishing it as a faculty that is concerned with the use of φαντασία. Thus, it appears that the ἡγεμονικόν could be equated with the rational soul breathed into man by God; because of this, the ἡγεμονικόν's judgement of φαντασία suggests that its governing role extends to the soul's lowest capacities, granting rationality to the whole soul.
43 Origen, *Comm. in Io*. I.19.114–116: "Οἶμαι γάρ, ὥσπερ κατὰ τοὺς ἀρχιτεκτονικοὺς τύπους οἰκοδομεῖται ἢ τεκταίνεται οἰκία καὶ ναῦς, ἀρχὴν τῆς οἰκίας καὶ τῆς νεὼς ἐχόντων τοὺς ἐν τῷ τεχνίτῃ τύπους καὶ λόγους, οὕτω τὰ σύμπαντα γεγονέναι κατὰ τοὺς ἐν τῇ σοφίᾳ προτρανωθέντας ὑπὸ θεοῦ τῶν ἐσομένων λόγους· «Πάντα γὰρ ἐν σοφίᾳ ἐποίησε». Καὶ λεκτέον ὅτι κτίσας, ἵν' οὕτως εἴπω, ἔμψυχον σοφίαν ὁ θεός, αὐτῇ ἐπέτρεψεν ἀπὸ τῶν ἐν αὐτῇ τύπων τοῖς οὖσι καὶ τῇ ὕλῃ <παρασχεῖν καὶ> τὴν πλάσιν καὶ τὰ εἴδη, ἐγὼ δὲ ἐφίστημι εἰ καὶ τὰς οὐσίας. Οὐ χαλεπὸν μὲν οὖν παχύτερον εἰπεῖν ἀρχὴν τῶν ὄντων εἶναι τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ, λέγοντα· «Ἐγώ εἰμι ἡ ἀρχὴ καὶ τὸ τέλος, τὸ Α καὶ τὸ Ω, ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος.» Ἀναγκαῖον δὲ εἰδέναι ὅτι οὐ κατὰ πᾶν ὃ ὀνομάζεται ἀρχή ἐστιν αὐτός."
44 Origen, *Hom. in Gen*. 1.1; PG 12: 145c: "Non ergo hic temporale aliquod principium dicit: sed in principio, id est in Salvatore factum esse dicit coelum et terram, et omnia quae facta sunt."
45 Origen, *Princ*. I.2.2; PG 11: 131b.
46 John 17:14, 16.
47 Origen, *Princ*. II.3.6; PG 11: 195ab: "Cujus mundi difficilem nobis esse expositionem idcirco prædiximus, ne forte præbeatur aliquibus occasio illius intelligentiæ, qua putent

nos imagines quasdam quas Graeci ἰδέας nominant, affirmare: quod utique a nostris alienum est, mundem incorporeum dicere, in sola mentis phantasia vel cogitationum lubrico consistentem."

48 Origen, *Princ.* II.3.6; PG 11: 194b: "Quod enim Latine mundum dicimus, Graece κόσμος appellatur."

49 Crouzel and Simonetti 1978: 150, n. 30 (comment on Origen, *Princ*. II.3), are happy to follow Wolfson 1956: 270, who suggests that this assertion goes back to Origen and is not the hand of Rufinus. Crouzel and Simonetti note, "Le terme idea a été introduit en latin par Sénèque, alors que Cicéron traduisait ἰδέα par *forma* ou *species*." It is curious, however, that *imagines* is the Latin used to translate ἰδέας, as *imagines* can be taken as a direct translation, rather than an explanation. There is an understandable motive behind the desire to attribute this claim to Origen, as it would distance him from claims that he is simply a Platonist. Yet, it would appear that what is going on in this passage is not a denial of the divine ideas, but a particular understanding thereof. Moreover, it is not clear what the Greek would be behind this, if this is not taken as a Rufinian translation – is one seriously to believe that Origen is writing "the εἰκόνες, which the Greeks call ἰδέας," as most modern translations seem to suggest? Or, alternatively, were the underlying Greek φαντασίας, one would be right to raise the question as to why Rufinus did not translate such a term with *phantasias* here, when this appears to be what he does in the following sentence.

50 Origen, *Comm. in Matt.* XIV.9; PG 13:1203b: "τὸ δὲ ἀληθὲς οὐχ οὕτως ἔχει. ἀθρόως γάρ, βουληθεὶς ὁ θεὸς ἀναρριπίσαι ἐν ταῖς πάντων μνήμαις (ὑπὲρ τοῦ ἕκαστον τῶν ἰδίων συναισθηθῆναι κρεῖττον ἢ χεῖρον πεπραγμένων) πάντα τὰ παρ' ὅλον τὸν χρόνον γεγενημένα ἑκάστῳ, ποιήσαι ἂν δυνάμει ἀφάτῳ. οὐ γὰρ ὥσπερ ἡμεῖς βουλόμενοι ὑπόμνησίν τινων ποιῆσαι δεόμεθα χρόνου διαρκοῦς πρὸς τὴν διέξοδον τῶν ὑφ' ἡμῶν λεγομένων καὶ φερόντων εἰς ἀνάμνησιν ὧν βουλόμεθα ἀναμνῆσαι, οὕτως ὁ θεὸς βουληθεὶς ἡμᾶς ὑπομνῆσαι τῶν ἐν τῷ βίῳ τούτῳ πεπραγμένων."

51 Origen, *C. Cels.* VI.64.25–28: "Ζητητέον δὲ καί, εἰ οὐσίαν μὲν οὐσιῶν λεκτέον καὶ ἰδέαν ἰδεῶν καὶ ἀρχὴν τὸν μονογενῆ καὶ πρωτότοκον «πάσης κτίσεως» ἐπέκεινα δὲ πάντων τούτων τὸν πατέρα αὐτοῦ καὶ θεόν"; cf. Philo, *Opif*. 6.2; *Migr*. 18.103.

52 Origen, *C. Cels.* IV.54.11–16.

53 "If, as we have seen, the Demiurge – and the World Soul – are identified by Antiochus with the Stoic Pneuma-Logos, there is nothing left for the Paradigm of the *Timaeus* to be but the content of the intellect of the Logos, the sum-total of his *logoi spermatikoi*, on the pattern of which the physical world is constructed. Now by agreement among all later Platonists, the Paradigm of the *Timaeus* was nothing but the sum total of the Ideas, which are given no place as such in the *Timeaus*. The *logoi spermatikoi* of the Logos thus inevitably become for Antiochus the Ideas in their 'transcendent' or 'objective' aspect. A suitable home has been found for them; they may now be termed 'the thoughts of God'." Cf. Dillon 1996: 95.

54 Based on the fact that Proclus, too, holds a version of this position (*In Tim*. 232.21).

55 Proclus reports Plotinus' interlocutor, Longinus', belief that the Paradigm is posterior to the Demiurge (*In Tim.* 322.24), a position most likely developed in Longinus' "On First Principles," based on Porphyry's report, in Porphyry, *Vit. Pl.* XIV.18–20: "Ἀναγνωσθέντος δὲ αὐτῷ τοῦ τε «Περὶ ἀρχῶν» Λογγίνου καὶ τοῦ «Φιλαρχαίου», «φιλόλογος μέν,» ἔφη, «ὁ Λογγῖνος, φιλόσοφος δὲ οὐδαμῶς».''; for more on Longinus, see Patillon and Brisson 2002.

56 Plotinus, *Enn.* V.5.1, 3–4: "δεῖ ἄρα αὐτὸν ἀεὶ εἰδέναι καὶ μηδ' ἄν ἐπιλαθέσθαι ποτέ."

57 Plotinus, *Enn.* V.5.1, 17–21: "τό τε γινωσκόμενον δι' αἰσθήσεως τοῦ πράγματος εἴδωλόν ἐστι καὶ οὐκ αὐτὸ τὸ πρᾶγμα ἡ αἴσθησις λαμβάνει· μένει γὰρ ἐκεῖνο ἔξω. Ὁ δὴ νοῦς γινώσκων καὶ τὰ νοητὰ γινώσκων, εἰ μὲν ἕτερα ὄντα γινώσκει, πῶς μὲν ἂν συντύχοι αὐτοῖς;"

58 Plotinus is very clear on the reflective nature of mind: "δεῖ τὴν θεωρίαν ταὐτὸν εἶναι τῷ θεωρητῷ, καὶ τὸν νοῦν ταὐτὸν εἶναι τῷ νοητῷ·" (*Enn.* V.3.5, 23); "ἕν ἄρα οὕτω

νοῦς καὶ τὸ νοητὸν καὶ τὸ ὄν καὶ πρῶτον ὄν τοῦτο καὶ δὴ καὶ πρῶτος νοῦς τὰ ὄντα ἔχων, μᾶλλον δὲ ὁ αὐτὸς τοῖς οὖσιν" (*Enn.* V.3.5, 26–29); "ἓν ἅμα πάντα ἔσται, νοῦς, νόησις, τὸ νοητὸν" (*Enn.* V.3.5, 43–44); "αὐτὸς [νοῦς] ἄρα ἑαυτὸν νοήσει" (*Enn.* V.3.5, 45–46); "νοῦς γὰρ καὶ νόησις ἕν" (*Enn.* V.3.6, 8); "ἑαυτὸν ἄρα νοῶν οὕτω πρὸς αὐτῷ καὶ εἰς ἑαυτὸν" (*Enn.* V.3.7, 19–20).

59 Plotinus, *Enn.* V.5.1, 14–15: "ἀλλ᾽ ἐν τοῖς πάθεσιν ἔχει τὴν δοκοῦσαν ὑπόστασιν καὶ νοῦ δεῖ ἢ διανοίας τῶν κρινούντων."

60 E.g. Plotinus, *Enn.* IV.3.5, 10.

61 Plotinus, *Enn.* V.5.9, 24–26: "ὥστε ὅλον πανταχοῦ οὐδενὸς [ἑνὸς] ἔχοντος αὐτὸ οὐδ᾽ αὖ μὴ ἔχοντος· ἐχομένου ἄρα ὁτουοῦν"; Proclus, likewise, has a "holism" (*El. theol*., prop. 52).

62 This term is coined to express the way in which νοῦς simultaneously thinks all things, cf. Emilsson 2007: 199–207. This notion ultimately means that there is no potency in the intellect: "all the intelligibles are fully whatever they are", cf. *ibid*.: 154.

63 See *Enn.* III.8 for a full explanation of the way in which contemplation grounds and is present in being; one might, likewise, consider Proclus' claim that that which is participated is present to its participant (*El. theol*. prop. 81).

64 Plotinus, *Enn*. III.2.1.21–22.

65 Origen, *Comm. in Io*. 32.350: "ζητῶ δὲ εἰ ἔνεστιν δοξασθῆναι τὸν θεὸν παρὰ τὸ δοξάζεσθαι ἐν υἱῷ, ὡς ἀποδεδώκαμεν, μειζόνως αὐτὸν ἐν ἑαυτῷ δοξαζόμενον, ὅτε ἐν τῇ ἑαυτοῦ γινόμενος περιωπῇ, ἐπὶ τῇ ἑαυτοῦ γνώσει καὶ τῇ ἑαυτοῦ θεωρίᾳ, οὔσῃ μείζονι <τῆς> ἐν υἱῷ θεωρίας, ὡς ἐπὶ θεοῦ χρὴ νοεῖν τὰ τοιαῦτα, δεῖν λέγειν ὅτι εὐφραίνεται ἄφατόν τινα εὐαρέστησιν καὶ εὐφροσύνην καὶ χαράν, ἐφ᾽ ἑαυτῷ". τοιαῦτα in the second to last clause is being taken adverbally; compare with Heine who translates, "because we must think such things in the case of God," cf. Heine 1993: 408.

66 E.g. John of Damascus, *De Fide Orthodoxa* I.8: "μία γὰρ οὐσία, μία ἀγαθότης, μία δύναμις, μία θέλησις, μία ἐνέργεια, μία ἐξουσία, μία καὶ ἡ αὐτὴ οὐ τρεῖς ὅμοιαι ἀλλήλαις, ἀλλὰ μία καὶ ἡ αὐτὴ κίνησις τῶν τριῶν ὑποστάσεων."

67 Stead notes that there is a substantial difference between Father and Son when he notes that, in Platonic fashion, Origen holds the Son as the one-many to the Father's status as one, cf. Stead 1977: 107. Also, consider what Stead says elsewhere, when he notes that, "Origen takes John 14:6, 'I am . . . the truth' as a basis for entitling Jesus ἡ τῆς ἀληθείας οὐσία, possibly 'the essence of truth' (*C. Cels.* VIII.12, cf. VII.16); here the Son, as truth, is contrasted with the Father of truth; and 'truth' no doubt has its rather specialised Platonic sense of ideal and eternal reality (. . .). In another passage Origen suggests that the Son may be compared, not to the Idea of truth, but to the Idea of the Good itself, which is the source of the being and value of all the other Ideas; while the Father is still further exalted." Cf. Stead 1977: 152.

68 Origen, *Comm. in Io*. 20.157.

69 Stead 1977: 152.

70 Bright 1884: 259: "Ἧγουν Τριάς ἐστι δόξαις οὐχ ὁμοίαις."

71 Bright 1884: 259–260: "Ξένος τοῦ Υἱοῦ κατ᾽ οὐσίαν ὁ Πατήρ, ὅτι ἄναρχος ὑπάρχει."

72 Bright 1884: 260: "Αὐτὸς γὰρ ὁ Υἱὸς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ οὐσίαν οὐκ οἶδεν."

73 Williams 1987: 7; cf. Von Harnack 1901: 45.

74 Philo, *Opif*. 6.25; *Migr*. 18.103; Origen, *C. Cels.* VI.64.

75 Νόησις νοήσεως νόησις (Aristotle, *Met*. Λ, 9: 1074b34–35).

76 Williams 1987: 231.

77 Williams 1987: 7; cf. Von Harnack 1901: 40, especially 43.

78 Athanasius, *C. Ar*. II, 5.2–3: "ὅτι ποιητὴς ὢν ὁ θεὸς ἔχει καὶ τὸν δημιουργικὸν λόγον οὐκ ἔξωθεν, ἀλλ᾽ ἴδιον ἑαυτοῦ·" Origen also identifies the δημιουργικὸς λόγος with God's creative aspect; Origen, is, however, explicit that this Logos is the Son of God (ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ υἱὸς λόγος εἴρηται) (Origen, *Frag. in Ev. Io*. 1, 66–68).

79 Anatolios Khaled gives a thorough treatment of this distinction in Khaled 1998: 100–109. E.g. "the Son is 'proper to' (ἴδιος) the Father, while all of creation is 'external to' or 'from outside' (ἐκτός, ἔξωθεν) the Father," cf. Khaled 1998: 102. For other examples of this in Athanasius, see *C. Ar*. I, 15–16; *C. Ar.* II, 57; *C. Ar.* III, 1; *C. Gent.* 46–47.

80 Athanasius, *C. Ar.* II, 82.1, 1–5: "μία γὰρ γνῶσις πατρὸς δι' υἱοῦ ἐστι καὶ υἱοῦ παρὰ πατρὸς καὶ χαίρει τούτῳ ὁ πατήρ καὶ τῇ χαρᾷ ταύτῃ εὐφραίνεται ἐν τῷ πατρὶ ὁ υἱὸς (. . .) ταῦτα δὲ δείκνυσι πάλιν μὴ εἶναι τὸν υἱὸν ἀλλότριον, ἀλλ' ἴδιον τῆς τοῦ πατρὸς οὐσίας." Note how Athanasius has the Father and Son sharing in the same εὐφροσύνη and χαρά, varying from Origen's earlier claim, in *Comm. in Io.* XXXII.350, "δεῖν λέγειν ὅτι εὐφραίνεται ἄφατόν τινα εὐαρέστησιν καὶ εὐφροσύνην καὶ χαράν, ἐφ' ἑαυτῷ."

81 John 1:14.

82 Athanasius, *Decr.* 22: "ταὐτὸν γὰρ ἡγήσαντο τὸ λέγειν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὸ λέγειν ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ θεοῦ εἶναι τὸν λόγον, ἐπεὶ καὶ τὸ θεός, καθὰ προεῖπον, οὐδὲν ἕτερον ἢ τὴν οὐσίαν αὐτοῦ τοῦ ὄντος σημαίνει. εἰ μὲν οὖν μὴ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστιν ὁ λόγος, ὡς ἂν εἴη υἱὸς φύσει γνήσιος ἐκ πατρός, ἀλλ' ὡς τὰ κτίσματα διὰ τὸ δεδημιουργῆσθαι λέγεται καὶ αὐτὸς ὡς τὰ πάντα ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ, οὔτε ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας ἐστὶ τοῦ πατρὸς οὔτε αὐτὸς ὁ υἱὸς κατ' οὐσίαν ἐστὶν υἱός, ἀλλ' ἐξ ἀρετῆς, ὡς ἡμεῖς οἱ κατὰ χάριν καλούμενοι υἱοί. εἰ δὲ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστι μόνος ὡς υἱὸς γνήσιος, ὥσπερ οὖν καὶ ἔστι, λεχθείη ἂν εἰκότως καὶ ἐκ τῆς οὐσίας τοῦ θεοῦ ὁ υἱός."

83 Athanasius, *Syn.* 35: "εὐθὺς δ' οὖν ἐπιφέρει «καὶ εἷς κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, δι' οὗ τὰ πάντα», ἵνα τῶν πάντων ἐξάρῃ τὸν υἱόν. τὰ γὰρ 'ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ' λεγόμενα πάντα ταῦτα δι' υἱοῦ γέγονε καὶ οὐχ οἷόν τε ὁμοίαν ἔχειν τὰ δημιουργούμενα τῷ δημιουργοῦντι τὴν γένεσιν, καὶ ἵνα τὸ 'ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ' λεγόμενον ὧδε ἄλλως ἐπὶ τῶν ποιημάτων αὐτὸ σημαίνεσθαι διδάξῃ, ἢ ὡς ἐπὶ υἱοῦ λεγόμενον νοεῖται."

84 See n. 74.

85 Meijering 1968: 12.

86 Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* II, 6.3; II, 3.1; II, 20.1; II, 20.2; IV, 34.1.

87 Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* II, 42.2.

88 Athanasius, *C. Gent.* III.8–9: "καὶ ὡς ἐν ἰδίοις ἀπατώμενοι, εἰς ἑαυτῶν ἐπιθυμίαν ἔπεσαν, τὰ ἴδια προτιμήσαντες τῆς πρὸς τὰ θεῖα θεωρίας." νοητά understood as implied by τὰ θεῖα, as it is used in this sense elsewhere in this passage.

89 Athanasius, *C. Gent.* II.15–18: "οὐδὲν γὰρ ἔχων ἐμπόδιον εἰς τὴν περὶ τοῦ Θείου γνῶσιν, θεωρεῖ μὲν ἀεὶ διὰ τῆς αὐτοῦ καθαρότητος τὴν τοῦ Πατρὸς εἰκόνα, τὸν Θεὸν Λόγον, οὗ καὶ κατ' εἰκόνα γέγονεν."

90 Athanasius, *C. Gent.* II.29–31: "λέγουσιν αἱ ἱεραὶ γραφαὶ κατὰ τὴν ἀρχὴν ἀνεπαισχύντῳ παρρησίᾳ τὸν νοῦν ἐσχηκέναι πρὸς τὸν Θεόν, καὶ συνδιαιτᾶσθαι τοῖς ἁγίοις ἐν τῇ τῶν νοητῶν θεωρίᾳ."

91 Origen, *Princ.* II.8.2–4.

92 Athanasius, *C. Gent.* II: "ὑπερεκπλήττεται δὲ κατανοῶν τὴν δι' αὐτοῦ εἰς τὸ πᾶν πρόνοιαν, ὑπεράνω μὲν τῶν αἰσθητῶν καὶ πάσης σωματικῆς φαντασίας γινόμενος, πρὸς δὲ τὰ ἐν οὐρανοῖς θεῖα νοητὰ τῇ δυνάμει τοῦ νοῦ συναπτόμενος."

93 Athanasius, *Inc*. VIII.1: "Οὐδὲν γὰρ αὐτοῦ κενὸν ὑπολέλειπται τῆς κτίσεως μέρος· πάντα δὲ διὰ πάντων πεπλήρωκεν αὐτὸς συνὼν τῷ ἑαυτοῦ Πατρί."

94 Such a vision is made explicit by Proclus when he notes, "πᾶσα ἐπιστροφὴ διὰ τῶν αὐτῶν, δι' ὧν καὶ ἡ πρόοδος" as the conclusion of *El. theol.* prop. 38, a reversion that is only made possible on the basis of likeness to that to which the reversion is directed. In the above instance, in a manner similar to what Proclus will later establish, one's ability to discern such Logos-based providence is instigated by one's being made after the image of the Logos (Athanasius, *C. Gent.* II).

95 Maximus, *Amb. Io*. 7; for more see Tollefsen 2008: 21 and Törönen 2007: 128.

96 Newman 1871: 6.

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9 Theurgy in Dionysius the Areopagite[1]

Panagiotis G. Pavlos

[K]αὶ αὐτὸς Ἰησοῦς, (ὁ θεαρχικώτατος νοῦς καὶ ὑπερούσιος, ἡ πάσης ἱεραρχίας ἁγιαστείας τε καὶ θεουργίας ἀρχὴ καὶ οὐσία καὶ θεαρχικωτάτη δύναμις, (. . .).[2]

Methodological concerns

A common tendency in the study of Neoplatonism and its relation to Early Christianity is to examine the thought of Church Fathers, and other Christian thinkers, as the unknown author of the *CD*, on the premises of mere appropriation or adaptation of, or response to, or even distortion of, the originality of the Neoplatonic tradition. A particular instantiation of this tendency is to see the works of Dionysius the Areopagite through the lenses of the Neoplatonic currents of his times.[3] Modern research offers relatively few opportunities of a *per se* consideration and evaluation of the Areopagitic contributions to Late Antique and Early Christian thought.[4] It seems that a consensus has been established in the scholarship to resort to Proclean, or Iamblichean, or other Neoplatonic influences, in order to ground an enquiry into Dionysius' philosophical and theological paths.[5]

This practice becomes evident in the study of the central ritualistic activity in Late Antiquity, that of "theurgy" (θεουργία).[6] In his introduction to the first edition of *Aristotle Transformed*, in 1990, Sir Richard Sorabji made a substantial statement on the relation between Iamblichus and Dionysius. He said that "Pseudo-Dionysius appropriates Iamblichus' ideas for Christianity," and "he even applies his [Iamblichus'] word 'theurgy' to the Christian sacraments."[7] Moreover, in his article "Neoplatonic Theurgy and Dionysius the Areopagite" (1999) Gregory Shaw concluded, among other things, that: a) there is no real distinction between Iamblichean and Dionysian theurgy, b) a proper understanding of Iamblichus suffices for grasping the Christian theurgy of the Areopagite as an example of theurgy that is already defined in *De Mysteriis*, and c) Christian Ecclesiology develops at odds to the natural cosmos.[8]

The Introductory chapter to this volume offers several considerations about the relation between Platonism and Christian thought and touches upon the need for one to be aware both of the different grounds and the directions of their respective traditions. Therefore, I shall not enter here into further details. What I wish

to remind the reader of though, is the need of being sensitive with respect to the premises that animate any discussion on the appropriation of Platonism by Christian thinkers. In spite of the temptation of reading the Areopagite Neoplatonically, there is an important Christian modification and variety of the metaphysical, cosmological, and epistemological principles that govern the development and structure of the Dionysian system.[9]

The implications of this for theurgy are enormous. It would suffice here to address just a crucial one. The understanding of the creation of the cosmos by one God, Triune in Persons but one in substance, annihilates the premise that governs the rationale of Iamblichean theurgy, as it is illustrated in passage T2 below. For there, Iamblichus says that "(. . .) the theurgic art discovers in general, in accordance with the properties of each of the gods, the receptacles adapted to them (προσφόρους ὑποδοχὰς)" and then proceeds to compositions that enable the implementation of theurgy. So for Iamblichus the condition that allows for theurgy is that the sensible world bears similarities, or commonalities proportionate to the multitude of divine entities, of gods, and these suitable receptacles facilitate the theurgic process further. The Areopagite, however, moves far beyond Iamblichus' understanding, when he asserts that the provider of the theurgic mysteries (θεουργὰ μυστήρια) is Christ Himself, and that Christian theurgy is founded on a concrete, initial historical event which Dionysius calls "archetypal dinner" (τυπικὴ τραπέζωσις).[10] Thus, for the Areopagite, theurgy is not an art depending for its efficacy on the similarities of the sensible world to the world of gods, but a novel historical event associated with God's physical presence in the world and a certain new theandric activity.[11]

Moreover, there is no doubt that Dionysius purposely employs a vocabulary that is correctly acknowledged as Neoplatonic, mostly Proclean.[12] But this, in my opinion, does not suffice to call him a Neoplatonist with all the respective consequences. There has been much discussion on this issue in the literature and many substantial points have been raised. My point here is a simple one: a vocabulary, a linguistic quiver does not bear any *a priori* qualification. It is just a language. And, indeed, Greek language, which supplies the Neoplatonic vocabulary, is a common achievement of Late Antique culture shared by people who may well adhere to different traditions, though living at the same time and place.[13] For instance, at the same time as the works of Clement circulate in the Christian communities in Alexandria, Ammonius Saccas educates the founder of Neoplatonism, Plotinus. All I am saying is that linguistic affinities do not suffice to qualify a thinker either way. To make it more explicit: I do not mean that one should take the coexistence of Christian literature with Plotinus as evidence of their commonality. On the contrary. The example of the Alexandrine milieu wants to say that although we encounter the same technical language in use both by Christians and non-Christians, still the orientation of its use may well be different.[14]

There is a detail that could resolve the persistent question why Dionysius chose to use the distinctive vocabulary of Neoplatonism. The literature has viewed the possibilities that the Areopagite is either a Christian who purposely uses a Neoplatonic vocabulary as a "Trojan horse" to invade and demolish the construction

of Neoplatonic theology and metaphysics in favour of Christianity; or even that he is a Neoplatonist who modified an originally Neoplatonic doctrine in order to manipulate the Christians in defence of Neoplatonism.[15] There is a third possibility however, which, in my opinion, goes beyond the stance of regarding Platonism and Christian thought in such a competitive, even suspicious manner. Here is my thought. If Dionysius really is a Christian who relies on Scripture and who, although not a direct disciple of St Paul, however listens faithfully to him and aligns himself to him, then he should really imitate the Pauline attitude: "(. . .) and for the Jews I became like a Jew, in order to bring Jews with me; to those under the law I became like one under the law, to bring with me those being under the law; (. . .) I have become everything for everyone, so I might save some by all means."[16] Here we have the straightforward statement of St Paul that defines his life and work. If Dionysius is a faithful disciple of St Paul, then he should definitely have adhered to his teacher's way of being and acting. This would be enough, I think, to explain why the Areopagite employs a Neoplatonic language. He addresses the people of his time by means of their proper tools of understanding. His strategy is not far away from St Paul's method of addressing the Athenians.

Another dimension of the Areopagite's intended use of Neoplatonic language is, I believe, worth mentioning, since it shows the multifaceted personality of this author, who apart from being a Christian, maintains Platonism in his capacity to embrace all that is *good* and *beautiful*. Plato says, in the *Epinomis* 987de: "we should also take that, whatever the Greeks receive from the barbarians, they elaborate it so that it becomes even better to its end."[17] This is a Platonic maxim that applies not only to the specific context of the worship of the stars, but–as any typical reader familiar with Platonism would easily confirm–Neoplatonic thought in its entirety. This maxim applied by Dionysius motivates him to gather all that is good and beautiful in the Greek tradition of his times, that is the Neoplatonic apparatus, and uses it in his *synthesis*.[18] In other words, the Neoplatonic material in the Dionysian Corpus serves as an *apt receptacle* (ἐπιτήδειος ὑποδοχή), so to say, for the diachronic reception of the Pauline teaching in the *Acts* in front of the Areopagus.[19] One may, of course, think that this argument is, at least, anachronistic, since the intellectual conditions of the fifth century are different: the decadence of Hellenistic thought in the first century, St Paul met with in Athens, should not be compared with the solid construction of the Athenian Neoplatonism. Even so, the Areopagite sees that the question on God remains unsolved even in his milieu of the fifth century.

In the light of the above, different contexts should also be paid attention to. One may think of Proclus' usage of the term παραγωγή in a standard emanative context, in *The Elements of Theology* and elsewhere, which should not be confused with the Dionysian use in a rather creationist context.[20] Thus, the claim that the Areopagite "(. . .) even applies his [Iamblichus'] word 'theurgy' to the Christian sacraments" should not be taken without qualification. There is indeed a certain amount of truth in Sorabji's claim; it is safe to conclude that Dionysius had read Iamblichus,[21] or, in any case, knew about *De Mysteriis* through his overall relation with, and influence from, Athenian Neoplatonism, and therefore

makes use of the same word.[22] In addition, one could also count on there being no identifiable Christian influence on Dionysius on the matter. As Peter Struck notes, "unlike, say, the term *theologia*, which has not only Neoplatonic but also Patristic legacies, theurgy simply lacks other significant contexts than the narrow Neoplatonic one."[23] But, despite the fact that Dionysian theurgy "is articulated in a variety of Neoplatonic terms especially reminiscent of the technical metaphysics of Proclus' *The Elements of Theology*,"[24] such an appropriation of the word "theurgy" by no means indicates that along with it the Areopagite receives, and reproduces, the specifics of a content elaborated in a Neoplatonic mindset.

Iamblichean influences and provenance

What I wish to do in this section is to provide the reader with some specifics that highlight the formation of the Iamblichean theurgic tradition, and which will allow her to discern similarities but also fundamental divergences between Iamblichus and Dionysius on the matter. There should not be substantial doubt about a certain amount of Iamblichus' background to the Dionysian development of theurgy. I suspect that the Areopagite might have been, *inter alia*, in the mind of John Dillon when the latter noted that "what is more worthy of attention, however, is the philosophical justification which he [Iamblichus] employs in defence of theurgy, and the importance which this has for the sacramental theology of the later Greek Christian Fathers."[25] To summarise the common practices in the literature, there are at least two ways which may lead one to affirm Iamblichus' echoes in the Areopagite. One is to go through textual evidence; I would call that an "internal" verification of Iamblichus' influence on Dionysius. This has been persuasively implemented by Paul Rorem in his highly influential study on the Biblical and Liturgical symbols in the works of the Areopagite.[26] Gregory Shaw has summed up Rorem's argument, in a part of which is found the position that the Dionysian division of three classes of worshippers is borrowed from Iamblichus, "who had distinguished three classes of souls and three forms of worship in the *De Mysteriis*."[27]

The other way is to go through a rather simple consideration of the historical development of Late Antique philosophy, after Plotinus. I would call that an "external" grounding of Dionysius' Iamblichean background. Here is what I have in mind. With Plotinus we are introduced into a path of Platonism where deification, "likeness to God" (ὁμοίωσις θεῷ), is achieved by the exclusive means of an intellectual activity proper that pulls the parts of the soul upwards, unifies the soul with the Intellect, and then both reach the completion of their conversion in a solitary encounter with the One. This is indeed a Platonic anticipation already expressed in Plato's *Theaetetus* 176b. Apparently, this Plotinian elaboration has left later Neoplatonists unsatisfied with regard to the destiny that Plotinus' interpretation of "likeness to God" reserves for matter and the "sensible" (αἰσθητόν), in general.[28] Iamblichus seems to be one of these dissatisfied people. One could recall, for instance, the respect and care with which he

addresses "matter" (ὕλη) as he considers it a divine and pure product of the Father and the Maker of all.[29] I do believe that Iamblichus' positive attitude towards matter is definitely an additional good reason for the Areopagite to have shown interest in him.[30]

For Iamblichus θεουργία is a term that "refers to the religious rituals–prayers, sacrifices, divinations–performed by the theurgist: it is one of a number of words–*θεουργία*, *μυσταγωγία*, *ἱερὰ ἁγιαστεία*, *ἱερουργία*, *θρησκεία*, *ἱερατικὴ τέχνη*, *θεοσοφία*, *ἡ θεία ἐπιστήμη*–which have all more or less the same meaning and which are frequently simply translated *théurgie* by E. des Places in his edition of Iamblichus' *de Mysteriis*."[31]

Theurgy and *epitēdeiotēs*

A core idea that shapes the grounds for the development of Iamblichean theurgy is the following. Divinity is present in the cosmos in such a way that it permeates the worthiest men to become its agents, in a manner proportional to their receptive capacity or "ἐπιτηδειότης".[32] *Epitēdeiotēs* (aptitude) is a central concept in Late Antique thought.[33] It is already present in the thought of Clement of Alexandria and Alexander of Aphrodisias. Both of them resort to it in exemplifying the relation between Aristotelian potentiality and actuality. It is presumably through Alexander that the concept was received by Plotinus, who elaborated it further, and since figures constantly in the accounts of Late Neoplatonists,[34] while it receives new content in the thought of the Areopagite whose formulations found fertile grounds in the works of St Maximus the Confessor.[35]

In its metaphysical context, *epitēdeiotēs* amounts to a kind of prerequisite for the reception of divinity.[36] From this point of view, it is safe to assert that Iamblichus' use of the concept in his theurgic context remains within the Neoplatonic mainstream where *epitēdeiotēs* is–since Plotinus–associated with a passive potency.[37] That is, it is associated with a capacity of an entity to undergo a change caused by an agent.[38] I say "is associated" and not "is identical" precisely because *epitēdeiotēs* is not merely about a "potency" (δύναμις) that would be the necessary condition for an alteration, transformation or change; rather, it is about that which gives potency to the "green light" for actualisation. In other words, I agree with Sambursky who has argued that *epitēdeiotēs* is the "sufficient" (not the "necessary") condition for a change.[39] If that is so, then *epitēdeiotēs* is additional to a correspondent potency.

But with Iamblichus, things seem to get a bit paradoxical at this point. It is very interesting to see how he exemplifies this prerequisite for the reception of divinity in his theurgic account, by focusing on the role water plays in preparing one to receive divinity. His case study is the oracle at Colophon:

> [T1] (. . .) [F]or the divine does not permeate what partakes in a fragmented [διαστατῶς] and divided [μεριστῶς] manner, but it is by exercising its power from without, and illuminating the spring, that it fills it with its own prophetic power. Still, not every inspiration that the water gives is from the god, but

> this only bestows [ἐμποιεῖ] the receptivity [ἐπιτηδειότης] and purification of the luminous spirit in us, through which we are able to receive the god [δι᾽ ἣν δυνατοὶ γιγνόμεθα χωρεῖν τὸν θεόν].[40]

There is something remarkable in this passage. For here Iamblichus seems to revert the order: "potency" led by "*epitēdeiotēs*" into "accommodating divinity" I referred to above. In his theurgic account, the material elements seem to be welcome into a rather paradoxical play. Namely, to provide *externally* to the patient the potency for the reception of divinity, a potency that – if my interpretation is correct – was not present to the subject before.[41] If this is so, and if this is not just an Iamblichean posture but rather a distinctive characteristic of pagan theurgy, then one can have an additional explanation of why Plotinus would never consider seriously the detrimental philosophical consequences of theurgy. In any case, and apart from the theoretical problems the prioritisation of matter raises to the intellectual pillar of Neoplatonism, what becomes evident above is that Iamblichus' theurgic account is built upon the capacity that entities–whether ensouled or inanimate–obtain by means of material–theurgic–objects, to accommodate divinity. This Iamblichean understanding of aptitude seems to differ from Dionysius' for whom the ecclesiastical hierarchy and order is built around one God, in accordance with beings' "θεοδόχον ἐπιτηδειότητα" (god-receiving aptitude), the latter not depending on theurgic material elements.[42] Interestingly, but not surprisingly, Iamblichus never describes *epitēdeiotēs* as "god-receiving."

Theurgy as *technē*

Moreover, the reality of Iamblichus' theurgy expands over a rationale that is reflected in his description of the function of theurgic art:

> [T2] Observing this, and discovering in general, in accordance with the properties of each of the gods, the receptacles adapted to them [προσφόρους ὑποδοχὰς], the theurgic art [θεουργικὴ τέχνη] in many cases links together stones, plants, animals, aromatic substances, and other such things that are sacred [ἱερὰ], perfect [τέλεια] and godlike [θεοειδῆ], and then from all these composes an integrated and pure receptacle [ὑποδοχὴν ὁλοτελὴ καὶ καθαρὰν].[43]

As far as I can see, Iamblichus' theurgic attitude towards sensible objects seems to have no parallel in Plotinus' *Enneads*. Speaking so, by no means would I come to question Plotinus' sensitivity towards living beings and nature in general. There is plenty of evidence offered by Porphyry in his *Life of Plotinus* that confirms the unique qualities of Plotinus as a man with care for sensible beings.[44] Unlike the theurgic tradition, in the view of Plotinus,[45] the material world is something to be left behind (or beneath). Irrespective of how one would read this passage, whether one would go for crediting Iamblichus with an *a priori*

qualification of material objects as "sacred," "perfect" and "godlike," or would agree that this qualification occurs after magical spells have transformed the constitution of the objects so as to become divine,[46] one thing is clear. For Iamblichus material objects are a substantial component of his theurgic actualisation of deification. What is not quite clear though, is how Iamblichus has come to acknowledge the divine-likeness (θεοείδεια) of all these materials. Perhaps, an answer could be found behind his alignment with Egyptian theurgy, a distinctive characteristic of which were to "imitate the nature of the universe and the creative activity of the Gods."[47] However the case may be, one would be reasonably tempted to bring the Areopagite closer to Iamblichus rather than to Plotinus, in this regard.

As every art is performed by an artist, "theurgic *technē*" needs an agent too. This is the "theurgist" (θεουργός). For Iamblichus, a theurgist is a purified human being, an initiated earthly agent focused on intellectual life, who enacts divine and divinising works upon beings:

> [T3] Those, on the other hand, who conduct their lives in accordance with intellect alone and the life according to intellect, and who have been freed from the bonds of nature, practise an intellectual and incorporeal rule of sacred procedure in respect of all the departments of theurgy.[48]

Note the significance of this passage. For it shows how difficult, even superficial, it would be to detach theurgy from the fundament of Neoplatonism, that is, the intellectual activity.[49] Clearly, Iamblichus builds upon Plotinus by asserting that the precondition for becoming a theurgist is the achievement of a proper intellectual life.[50] Purification is understood as the detachment from earthly matters by means of a life governed by the intellect. Such a purified being, a theurgist, is befitted with the power of the unutterable symbols (συνθήματα), which transform him, as it were, from an ordinary human being into a divine being, and enable him to perform acts with powers alien to "common" mortals:

> [T4] The theurgist, through the power of arcane symbols, commands cosmic entities no longer as a human being or employing a human soul but, existing above them in the order of gods, uses threats greater that are consistent with his own proper essence (. . .).[51]

The basic component, or characteristic, of this "ontological upgrade" of the theurgist is that he receives a power belonging to gods, which renders him nothing other than a divine agent. Yet, such a person remains a man, a human being, after the *temporary* theurgic deifying process is completed.[52] This last remark brings Iamblichus' understanding of a theurgist in perfect contrast to the Areopagite's. For the latter, as it is evident in passage T6 below, does not speak of a temporary theurgic effect taking place on the theurgist but of the permanent novel theandric activity of God having become man.

Dionysian novelty

At the opening of this chapter it was said that the term θεουργία is exclusively used by the Areopagite in a twofold manner. It refers a) to the works of Christ in His earthly historical presence, and b) to the whole divine providential, creative, sustaining, and divinising divine activity and work of God. For Dionysius theurgy and its derivative "theurgist" (θεουργός) applies exclusively to Christ, the God-Man. A being perfectly human and, at the same time, perfect God – that is to be acknowledged in two natures "inconfusedly" (ἀσυγχύτως), "unchangeably" (ἀτρέπτως), "indivisibly" (ἀδιαιρέτως) and "inseparably" (ἀχωρίστως), as the Council of Chalcedon had established.[53] So the first case is about the source of the Christian sacramental tradition, in which the predominant position is reserved for the "liturgy" (λειτουργία) or "eucharist" (εὐχαριστία).[54] The term Dionysius uses is "σύναξις" (gathering-together).[55] The core meaning of the liturgy develops on the grounds of the reiteration of the initiative established by Christ with the Last Supper. The general scope of the liturgical reality in the works of the Areopagite is the "celebration of the acts of God, especially, and centrally the divine activity manifest in the Incarnation of Jesus."[56] The Eucharist along with the baptism and the sacrament of the oil is the first sacramental triad that expounds the services of the ordination, the monastic consecration, and the funeral.[57]

Indeed, a careful reader of the Corpus would easily come to confirm these two directions and would have to admit that, consequently, for Dionysius a theurgist could not be anyone else than Christ Himself. It becomes immediately obvious that the first dimension of Dionysian theurgy brings about the much-debated topic of Christology in the works of the Areopagite.[58] I shall abstain from entering into it here, not only because this would lead us far off the scope of the present chapter, but also because the treatment of this question has nowadays arrived at a positive conclusion favouring the definite Christological character of the Corpus.[59] Yet, I shall focus on some passages of strong Christological taste that substantiate my argument. In the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* Dionysius shows in a quite straight forward way that theurgy and everything related to it stems from, depends on, and associates with Christ Himself:

> [T5] For thus, as the Word of God [θεολογία] has taught us who feast at his Banquet, even Jesus Himself–the most supremely Divine Mind [θεαρχικώτατος νοῦς] and superessential [ὑπερούσιος], the Source and Essence [ἀρχὴ καὶ οὐσία], and most supremely Divine Power of every Hierarchy [ἱεραρχίας] and Sanctification [ἁγιαστείας] and Divine operation [theurgy, θεουργίας]–illuminates the blessed Beings who are superior to us, in a manner more clear, and at the same time more intellectual, and assimilates them to His own Light, as far as possible (. . .).[60]

This passage confirms that Dionysius in no way promotes a multitude of gods that distribute a certain theurgic capacity to their recipients through intermediate entities or material items, as the water of the oracle of Colophon. Against the

Neoplatonic multiplicity of higher and lower divine entities that bestows theurgic properties on worthy men by means of material items, here we have a straightforward statement that the principle, source, substance, and power of theurgy is one Triune God,[61] the God-Man (θεάνθρωπος), Christ himself, the source of all powers and activities. One may rightly object that the term *theanthrōpos* is not employed by Dionysius. The Areopagite, however, does acknowledge identification, or–more accurately–*unification* (ἕνωσις) of divinity with mankind. He does so in several ways throughout his Corpus, the most characteristic perhaps, being the debated conclusion of his 4th Epistle.

> [T6] For, even, to speak summarily He was not man, not as not being man, but as being from men was beyond men, and was above man, having truly been born man, and for the rest, not having done things Divine as God, nor things human as man, but exercising for us a certain new God-incarnate energy [θεανδρικὴν ἐνέργειαν] of God having become man.[62]

Had Dionysius not used "theurgy" anywhere else in the Corpus, passages T5 and T6 alone would suffice to demonstrate the absence of Neoplatonic orientation in his mind with regards to theurgy. In other words, were the sentence "καινήν τινα τὴν θεανδρικὴν ἐνέργειαν ἡμῖν πεπολιτευμένος," and especially its content, missing from the works of the Areopagite, any attempt to claim novelty in the manner he regards theurgy would be totally hopeless. This new "theandric activity," that since the 1960s has caused a scholarly debate and offered reasons to regard it as an "objective link between Dionysius and Proclus," as Henri-Dominique Saffrey had proposed,[63] is repeatedly acknowledged in several places throughout the *CD*. I take one passage from the *Celestial Hierarchy* to be of relevance here:

> [T7] Thus, for example, the most divine Gabriel instructed [ἐμυσταγώγει] Zachariah, the Hierarch, that the son who was to be born to him, beyond hope, by Divine grace, should be a prophet of the God-incarnate work of the Lord Jesus [τῆς (. . .) ἀνδρικῆς τοῦ Ἰησοῦ θεουργίας], to be manifested to the world for its salvation, as becomes the Divine goodness; and he revealed to Mary, how, in her, should be born the supremely Divine mystery of the unutterable God-formation [τὸ θεαρχικὸν τῆς ἀφθέγκτου θεοπλαστίας μυστήριον].[64]

This passage depicts, as a matter of fact, the prophetic vision of an event without equivalent in the history of mankind and the cosmos; namely the entry and presence of God in history, in the Incarnation of Logos in the person of Jesus the Son of God, the Son of man. The Areopagite's persistence on describing with theurgy the acts of Christ is evidenced in another significant passage from the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, which is concluded by the Dionysian view of theurgy as the consummation of theology:

> [T8] (. . .) the one [Old Testament] affirms the *theurgies* of Jesus to come [τὰς ἐσομένας Ἰησοῦ θεουργίας], and the other [New Testament] fulfils them.

> Just as the former wrote the truth in figures, the latter demonstrates its presence [παροῦσαν]. The *completed performance* [τελεσιουργία] in the latter confirms the truth of things foretold in the former, and *theurgy* is the consummation of theology [καὶ ἔστι τῆς θεολογίας ἡ θεουργία συγκεφαλαίωσις].[65]

This is about a particular, concrete frame, introduced by the Areopagite, which leaves little room for holding the view that Dionysius thinks of theurgy in Neoplatonist, whether Iamblichean or Proclean, or any other terms. What is common in passages T5–T8 is the strong Christocentric background of the Dionysian concept of theurgy. Dionysian Christocentricity, overall, and with regards to theurgy, was pointed out by Fr. Andrew Louth who affirmed that "Dionysius seems much more Christocentric than has often been allowed."[66]

The second frame from within which Dionysian theurgy emerges is Dionysius' approach to the knowability of God and all that comes along with it about the knowledge of the cosmos as made by God. In a wonderful summary of Dionysius' approach Fr. Georges Florovsky helps to reveal the springs of Dionysian theurgy:

> God is revealed and acts and is present in creatures – a creature exists and abides and lives by virtue of this Divine Omnipresence. God is present in the world not in his own essence, which always remains unattainable, unknowable, and ineffable, but in his 'works' and his goodness, which come from the incommunicable God as an abundant current and which gives communion to what exists. He abides in the world in his 'creative emanations' and 'beneficial providences,' *in his powers and energies*. In his self-revelation to the world, God is cognisable and comprehensible. This means that God is comprehensible only through revelation.[67]

The Areopagite can speak about theurgy, since he acknowledges that God has revealed Himself. This revelation entails divine action, which precisely points to the understanding of θεουργία as *ergon theou* where the "theou" is a subjective genitive, as we shall see below. Strikingly, Florovsky reveals another–hidden up to now–interpretation of Dionysian theurgy. For if creatures "exist" and "abide" and "live" by virtue of the "Divine Omnipresence," then creatures are manifestations of theurgy as well. We, human beings, are theurgic "products." This is novel indeed. For, even if one would come to argue that the idea of Divine Omnipresence is not an Areopagitic innovation, but rather an old Platonic conception detailed, at least, by Plotinus, in *Enneads* VI.4 and 5, Florovsky makes perfectly clear the distinction, implicit in Dionysius, between divine essence and activity, which differs from Plotinus' doctrine of double activity.

In Plotinian theology, God, the One, *has* (or, better, *is*) a double activity.[68] The inner activity of the One would correspond to the divine essence Florovsky refers to. But the Plotinian illustration of the external activity of the One leaves no doubt that–as a matter of fact–it is about the "essence" of the One that overflows. The external activity that emanates is nothing other than an excess of the very inner

activity. So for Plotinus there is no distinction between divine essence and activity, because the cosmos comes to be emanatively, eternally, and therefore necessary. For Plotinus there is no such a precosmic state (or, better, non-state) "when there was" no external activity of the One. Only a doctrine of creation "saves" God's freedom from the necessity of identifying creation with His essence. This insight is crucial, I believe. For, taken to its extreme, shows that, from the Dionysian Christian point of view, there is no real "theurgy" in Neoplatonism.[69]

Theurgy as goodness

Florovsky does not forget to mention divine Goodness, which indeed pervades the Corpus, and is the main theme of Chapter 4 of the *Divine Names*. "Ἀγαθότης" is a divine name that has a long history before Dionysius and which, in the cosmological context, links him directly with Plato's *Timaeus*. What is significant in connection with Dionysian theurgy is that the Areopagite offers another hint of the divine origin of *theurgia* by making up a term similar to it: "agathurgy" (ἀγαθουργία). He identifies theurgy with the activity of God the Good by using the term "ἀγαθουργία" and its derivative "ἀγαθουργῶς." The parallel appearance of theurgy and "agathurgy" is frequent in several passages, especially in the *EH*, where, according to Thesaurus Pseudo-Dionysii Areopagitae, *agathourgia*, and the familial "ἀγαθουργός," "ἀγαθουργικός," "ἀγαθουργῶς," "ἀγαθουργικῶς," appear in total about 14 times.[70] I do not see any parallel to this Dionysian word coinage in Iamblichus' *De Mysteriis*. At least, there is no such a term registered in the Index to Clarke *et al*. edition. So for the Areopagite, it is God the Good who acts theurgically. Thus every theurgy is an agathurgy, a divine work agathurgically enacted and manifested. One may comment that all the above novel Dionysian terms fall under the need to examine their syntactical relation as in the case of theurgy. That is, whether agathurgy is about a work of the Good or a work that aims at the Good. The contexts where agathurgy and the like appear make no room to consider the second possibility. I think we should take ἔργον ἀγαθοῦ in the same manner as with ἔργον θεοῦ, as it is asserted below.

Moreover, Florovsky continues, "there is, however, another revelation. This is the world itself, for in a certain sense the entire world is a certain image of God and is entirely permeated with Divine energies. And in God there is a 'creative prototype' of the world, through participation in which the world has objective reality."[71] For Dionysius the entire world is a manifestation of God. It is indeed a "theophany." Earlier, I said that the Iamblichean notion of theurgy expands over the idea that divinity is present in the cosmos in such a way that permeates the worthiest men to become agents of her, in a manner proportional to their receptive capacity. If that is the case with Iamblichus, then what makes a difference with regards to theurgy in Dionysius?

Apart from what has been already argued about the Neoplatonic multitude of divine entities versus the Dionysian Triune God, I think that there is something more to be extracted by Florovsky's illustration. That in God there is a "creative prototype" prompts us to think that the created cosmos has a *telos*, an aim to

reach. This aim cannot be reached but through participation in this divine reality which unfolds not only the real dimension of the cosmos that is the divine image imprinted on it, but also the fulfilment of the cosmos, which is the dynamic status of divine likeness. Divine likeness, in turn, is possible only by participation, according to the measures of aptitude, and by means of "συνεργία" (synergy) between man and God.[72] I have the impression that all this leads us far away from the limits Iamblichus had, indeed succeeded to reach, with his development of theurgy; there is indeed a very noteworthy development from Plotinus to Iamblichus, considering that for Plotinus we indeed love and need the One, but It is not interested in us or "loves" us.

In chapter 4 of the *Divine Names* the Areopagite employs the terms θεῖος ἔρως (divine eros, love), which he predicates with the adjective ἐκστατικὸς (ecstatic, self-emptying). This providential love of God is the very agitator, the source of Dionysian theurgy. "Divine love envelops the lovers like a kind of ecstasy – ἔστι δὲ καὶ ἐκστατικὸς ὁ θεῖος ἔρως. This love is kindled by God himself – with the tender breath of his goodness."[73] If the overall aim of Dionysian theurgy is to render everyone God and if Florovsky is correct in that "this [divine] love is also the beginning of order and harmony – a simple and self-propelled force which draws everything towards unity, towards 'a certain unity-creating dissolution',"[74] then for the Areopagite theurgy is firmly connected with God's love for the mankind and His "philanthropy" (φιλανθρωπία).[75]

Theurgy and hierurgy: Ὕμνος and Αἶνος

In the Areopagite's thought there appears another distinctive element that stresses his distance from mainstream Neoplatonism. For whenever Dionysius resorts to hymns–and he does so quite often–he does not suggest worshipping a mundane entity or any other kind of activity, whether mundane or derived from superior or intermediate divine entities. Rather, he distinguishes between divine and human activity in a manner without Neoplatonic parallel. For him, divine activity is to be "hymned" (ὑμνῆσαι) as "theurgy," whereas human activity is to be "praised" (αἰνέσαι) as "hierurgy," a work offered by holy men. Thus, theurgy corresponds to a transmission of God's divine activity and hierurgy to its partaking.[76] The last two notions form the reality of participation both in its sacramental implementation and the wider Christian metaphysical contours. In other words, the Dionysian act of "*hymnēsis*" is about venerating the superabundant love that renders the "substantially unparticipated" benevolently and philanthropically participable:

> [T9] Now the sacred description [ἱερογραφία] of the Divine Odes, whose purpose is to sing [ὑμνῆσαι] the words [θεολογίας] and works of God [θεουργίας] throughout, and to praise [αἰνέσαι] the holy words [ἱερολογίας] and works [ἱερουργίας] of godly men, forms a universal Ode and narrative of things Divine, in those who inspiredly recite it, a habit suitable for the reception and distribution of every Hierarchical mystery.[77]

The Dionysian concept of participation consists of two distinct parts: "transmission" (μετάδοσις) and "partaking" (μετάληψις). The Areopagite integrates this originally Neoplatonically established pair of components that constitute participation in a twofold manner. The one aspect of this integration relates to the wider metaphysical participatory contours. The other focuses on the specific sacramental tradition and reality of the Church, which is rooted back in the "archetypal dinner" (τυπικὴ τραπέζωσις) offered by Christ to his disciples,[78] and culminates in the Divine Liturgy, which "consists not of sacred words but of sacred action."[79] As fr. Vasileios Gontikakis puts it, in the Liturgy "we do not speak but act."[80] At the same time, Divine Liturgy is not only "a celebration of the acts of God, especially, and centrally the divine activity manifest in the Incarnation of Jesus," but also the paradox, albeit real, mysterious, hyper-temporal presence of Christ in history, as promised by Christ himself: "in a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me; because I live, you will also live."[81] Both the above aspects are valuable in indicating the new dimensionality the notion of theurgy receives in Areopagite's thought.

Though Dionysius praises the reality of participation, he does not think of theurgy in Neoplatonic terms. For what becomes evident in passage T9 is that, for the Areopagite "transmission" (μετάδοσις) is an act of "theurgy" (θεουργία), whereas "partaking" (μετάληψις) is an act of "hierurgy" (ἱερουργία). This means that when Dionysius employs the term theurgy, he does not mean worshipping, let alone performing a mundane activity; not at all. Rather, with θεουργία he refers to the historical divine acts of Christ and their reiteration within the liturgical celebration. This is what Louth underlines by saying that "Denys seems to make a clear distinction between θεουργία, which refers to the divine acts praised in the liturgy, and the celebration of the liturgy itself, for which his favourite term is ἱερουργία and related words."[82]

So the Areopagite introduces a radical distinction between divine and human activity. It is the divine activity in all its manifold presence that deserves to be hymned (ὑμνῆσαι) as theurgy (θεοῦ ἔργον). Human activity is not venerated but ought to be praised (αἰνέσαι) as hierurgy (ἱερουργία), the latter precisely signifying a work offered by holy men. At best, what one could conclude at this point with regards to Iamblichean theurgy, is that what Iamblichus postulates with his θεουργία is nothing other than the Dionysian activity of hierurgy.[83] This is the only possible correspondence between the two.

For Dionysius, it is God himself, the One Trinitarian God, and not a multitude of Gods, who acts and transmits His gifts, the divine gifts. These gifts are received and further transmitted to the host of the members constituting the ecclesiastical hierarchy through the act of hierurgy. One could make the case that this also applies to Neoplatonism. In Proclus, for instance, it is the triune One, Mind, and Soul that projects theurgic energies below, mediated by subordinated gods and their prevailing henads. But this similarity would be only apparent. Not only because Proclus' system is fundamentally polytheistic. But, because, as Norman Russell notes, "the philosophical ascent of the human soul, even if assisted by theurgy, is essentially an intellectual process. In Proclus, the tapping into the

divine power is by appropriate rituals," while for Dionysius, "the theurgical activity that enables the believer to benefit from it [in other words, to partake, through hierurgy, of the divine gifts] is at its deepest level the very activity of the incarnate Christ that makes the sacraments efficacious."[84] One should pay attention to the fact that, for the Areopagite, God does not have to be requested – in the symbolic manner a Neoplatonist would evoke divinity[85] – in order to proceed to the transmission of his gifts. Such a transmission is voluntary and implemented in the sacrament of the Eucharist as a reiteration, nonetheless singular and unique, of the specific divine initiative that was initially–and, again, voluntarily–historically established by Christ in the Last Supper. If that is the case, then the claim that "Dionysian (and Eastern Church, for that matter) sacramental theology is thus fundamentally similar to Hellenic *theourgia* in that both use material *symbola* to harness divine *energeia*, but there is a subtle shift in terminology as between Dionysius and his Neoplatonic predecessors,"[86] is not very accurate. The material symbols are not used because of an initial belief that they have theurgic properties, and therefore attract the divine energy. Rather, it is Christ Himself who acts in the Liturgy as He acted in the Last Supper and transforms the bread and the wine into His flesh and blood. So long as the bread and wine are considered as mere symbols and not seen, paradoxically, as flesh and blood, there is, indeed, no difference between Iamblichus and the Areopagite with regards to theurgy.

There are at least two more significant distinctive characteristics of Dionysian theurgy. The one is about a distinction and the other is about an identification. While for Iamblichus theurgy and hierurgy are concepts equivalent in their content value, for the Areopagite theurgy is the prerequisite of hierurgy. There is no hierurgy without theurgy. This is made perfectly clear in the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*, where Dionysius clears out that "thus, the hierarch is united with the divine and having hymned the holy theurgies performs the most holy and leads to vision what has been hymned."[87] The implementation of the hierurgic activity of the hierarch presupposes the recognition and veneration of a great number of holy theurgies that Dionysius admits he can hardly sufficiently enumerate.

Theurgist and Ἔργον Θεοῦ

It has been debated in the literature whether the author of the *CD* could be regarded as a θεουργός, and what is the syntactical relation between the two components of the compound θεουργία (θεὸς and ἔργον). I suggest approaching the first question by the aid of the following distinction. Namely, of whether to be a theurgist is a *substantial* (οὐσιῶδες) idiom of someone or simply an *accidental* one (συμβεβηκός). Earlier in this chapter it was said that Iamblichus' Neoplatonic theurgy is qualified as an art (τέχνη), and therefore, the theurgist is considered as an artist as well; one who has learnt to perform the theurgic art. We have seen that for Iamblichus a theurgist is a mere human being that has reached a proper intellectual end and has been purified by certain specific ritualistic processes. The fact that not all human beings are theurgists but only those who have been ritualistically transformed clearly indicates that an Iamblichean theurgist should

be thought of *kata symbebēkos*.[88] One may reasonably argue that this distinction comes in contrast to what Louth has asserted on the matter. His take is that "θεουργός, in pagan use is usually a noun, meaning a theurgist, one who practices theurgy." But, he adds, "in Denys it is always an adjective."[89] This comment does not, in fact, contradict the distinction I am making.

The Areopagite's hierarchical conception of the cosmos is an "open" system; that is, a system reflecting an absolute freedom inserted into a *dynamic* cosmos that is likely created out of nothing.[90] The entire cosmos is a divine work, a theurgy, a product of divine activity that came to be out of nothing. On the basis of the earlier discussion of the presumed Dionysian *creatio ex nihilo*, the world should be seen not as creation out of God's "essence" (οὐσία) – a view developed in the Mediaeval revival of Neoplatonism, divine essence taken as non-being – but of absolute zero in an excess of divine goodness (δι' ὑπερβολὴν ἀγαθότητος). God did not fuse His divine essence to the world in creating it. Rather, all that is made is made as a manifestation and actualisation of divine power. Hence, God remains hidden from the cosmos. Yet, He is present through His activity. This activity is theurgy, a "power," a "quality," a "manifestation" of Him who remains substantially unknown.[91] Had there been no Incarnation, one could not have been able to discern Christ as *the kat' ousian* theurgist. But the specific aspect of Dionysian "theophany" as Incarnation comes to unveil the agent of this extraordinary theurgic power. This "revelation" shapes the grounds of deification in Dionysius and reveals the aim of his theurgy: *theōsis* "by grace" (θέωσις κατὰ χάριν).[92] Evidently, it appears a way to positively assert Dionysius, that is a mere human being, as a theurgist but only in the scope of deification, for which a necessary condition is the synergy between God and man.[93]

I move now to the second question of this section, which has been nicely illustrated by Gregory Shaw as "Who is the Subject of the Ergon Theou"?[94] Apparently, after the last concept mentioned in the previous paragraph, things become rather trickier than one may have thought. If I wished to enigmatically illustrate what I believe Dionysius would have to answer, I would suggest that Shaw's initial question should now become "who *are* the *subjects* of the Ergon Theou." But let us have things in order. The question is about who really the agent of theurgy is, and consequently, who is the receiver of it. This question has an interest and that is that the answers proposed in the scholarly literature highlight the divergences between Dionysius and Iamblichus. Shaw discusses Rorem's argument that the word *theos* is an objective genitive in Iamblichus' use of θεουργία; that is, theurgy is about a work offered, or addressed to God.[95] Then, he sets forth Louth's modifications of Rorem's argument, which stand by the same line, but which, I have the impression, give a greater joy to Shaw than Rorem's position does. Finally, he presents some rather psychological reasons on the impossibility to take the subject of *ergon theou* to be a human, in Iamblichus, as argued by Annick Charles-Saget and John Rist. I am inclined to admit that, if Christ is the only one who Dionysius considers as the real theurgist, then clearly this genitive *theou* should be a subjective one. This comes out from the Dionysian vision of the cosmos as theurgy, as well. Now, the fact that Dionysius innovatively introduces

the concept of synergy between God and man in the salvific/deifying process prompts one to think that synergy necessarily entails the inclusion of man as a second subject of theurgy. It would need a separate study to advance this idea further. But I could simply ground my argument upon this: the lives of the Saints of the Church, and primarily the *Acts* of the Apostles, show that they should be included as co-subjects to *ergon theou*, beyond their role as mere partakers of the divine activity.[96] As a matter of fact, they are (active) theurgists as well, healing people from bodily and spiritual bonds.[97] So, synergy with God effects to a God-likeness that bears along all capacities and implementations of God's theurgy in the cosmos.

Critical remarks

I wish to add some remarks that derive as a corollary from what has been said so far and come in support of the claim about the misinterpretations the Dionysian notion of theurgy has received. As it is often the case, misinterpretations of a certain text may be due to a kind of praising the textual evidence along with a selective concealment of passages that neutralise what is distinctive in a specific context, whether Christian or Neoplatonist. It has been argued in the literature that distinguishing between Iamblichean and Dionysian theurgy is a result of a caricature of Iamblichean theurgy, made by many theologians and other scholars. This claim pairs with the belief that one has only to understand properly Iamblichus' theurgy as it is presented in *De Mysteriis*, in order to regard theurgy according to the Areopagite as an example of theurgy that appears in Iamblichus. Gregory Shaw, in his substantial comparison between Iamblichean and Dionysian theurgy, aims at refuting "the false distinction between 'pagan' and Christian theurgy" and suggesting that "such distinctions reflect more apologetic interests of scholars than an accurate reading of the evidence."[98]

There is a, if not many, typical trap here. That is, to consider the evidence of an *apologetic* as inferior to what one would regard and qualify as an accurate reading of the evidence. But evidence *qua* evidence is never sufficient for any conclusion unless it is anticipated by certain philosophical and/or religious disposition and frame of reference. Thus, the accuracy of the evidence should be evaluated on the grounds of the tradition that has produced it. This means that Iamblichus should be evaluated "Iamblicheanly" whereas Dionysius "Dionysianly." Otherwise, there is nothing that can hinder the reversion of Shaw's argument "when Iamblichean theurgy is properly understood, the Christian theurgy may be seen as an example of the same kind of theurgy that Iamblichus defined in the *De Mysteriis*,"[99] into, for instance, "when Dionysian theurgy is properly understood, Iamblichean theurgy may be well seen as a material that served as the receptacle of Christian God's Revelation." Moreover, the term "apologetic" (ἀπολογητής) refers to a person who feels the urge to provide an account in defence of a truth that is offended. As such, an axiological judgement against the *apologetics* is veiling rather than unveiling a truth, unless this truth should be credited *a priori* and exclusively to a specific (say non-apologetic) mindset.[100] It is definitely correct

though, what Shaw suggests, namely that "scholars of Neoplatonic theurgy could learn a great deal from Dionysius about the specifics of theurgic ritual that Iamblichus does not discuss."[101] Yet, this suggestion adheres in its premise to the assumption of an essential commonness between Iamblichean and Dionysian theurgy. What one learns precisely through the Areopagite, is not about any Neoplatonic *teletē* but, rather, about the theurgy of Him who was announced to the Athenians at the times of the, homonymous to our hidden author, higher officer of Areopagus. It is true that Iamblichus does not discuss what we find in Dionysius, because Dionysian theurgy is grounded on a reality entirely alien to Iamblichus. Such reality consists *inter alia* of the Baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River, the Archetypal Dinner, the Transfiguration on the mount Tabor, and the unintended transferring of healing power from Christ to the bleeding woman, in the midst of a crowd congregation. All these instances should be boldly contrasted to Iamblichean, or Proclean, theurgy.[102]

Moreover, Shaw seems to project on Dionysius an Iamblichean, typically Neoplatonic, view on deification. In his words, "(. . .) we must follow Dionysius in seeing the liturgy as theurgy, a rite that effects a cognitive, perceptual, and ontological shift so profound in receptive participants that it culminates in *theōsis*, the deification of the soul."[103] Indeed, deification of the soul is the core of Platonic likeness to God. Nevertheless, this is a statement far from illustrating the aim of Areopagite's theurgy, which is deification of the body-soul compound of the human being.[104] It would be impossible to exclude the body from the unquestionably Christian approach of Dionysius to deification. So even if it would be correct to assert that "Iamblichus was the first to provide a comprehensive rationale of the pronounced interest, among Syrian theologians, in experiencing the divine rather than merely thinking and talking about it,"[105] this experience is precisely obtained not only to the benefit of the soul but also of the body. In my opinion, this is one of the real reasons why "Iamblichus does not discuss about the specifics of theurgic ritual" that are to be found in Dionysian theurgy.[106]

Something needs to be said about the understanding of the cosmos as *ekklēsia*, as church, by the Areopagite. The term ἐκκλησία, which Dionysius uses to name his treatise on the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*,[107] where most of his account on theurgy is to be found, reflects one of the divine names he treats in his homonymous treatise, in predicating God. Florovsky puts it nicely:

> God is the end of everything, for everything exists for his sake and receives from him its beauty; that is its proportion and measure. Following Plato (and Proclus) Dionysius produces *κάλλος* from *καλοῦν*, to 'call, summon,' and repeats the Platonic idea of beauty as the object of attraction. It is precisely beauty which kindles love. (. . .) The beginning of every existence and order lies in this supreme beauty, for a single beauty attracts, unifies, and coordinates everything. Hence, all connections, all similarity, and all agreement in objective reality. Hence, measure and movement, heterogeneity and simplicity. Being above any division or multitude, God brings everything to himself as a higher, longed-for-beauty and blessing.[108]

Florovsky's illustration helps us to see clearly the motive and the aim of the Dionysian ecclesiastical hierarchy. The latter is not about a noetic, intellectual reconstruction, or even replacement, of the cosmos and natural reality. Precisely, as Florovsky clarifies it, the very constitution of the natural cosmos, the objectivity in it, which stems from the possibility to discern all connections and similarities in the cosmos, depends on, and derives from, the attribute of God as *beauty* (κάλλος) that *invites* (καλοῦν) everything towards him.[109]

So for Dionysius there is nothing like contradiction, opposition, contrast, or conflict between the natural world and the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Precisely, the real, objective being of the cosmos is revealed as *ekklēsia* and the hierarchy emerges and is shaped on the grounds of this divine *call*. If that is the case, then there by no means appears any need to ponder on whether Dionysian theurgy is cosmocentric or anthropocentric. Although not explicitly stated, but evidently, the Areopagite's theurgy is Christocentric.[110] As St Maximus the Confessor asserted later, man is the mediator between God and His cosmos. The aim of Dionysian hierarchy is to emphasise this role of the human being, which after the Fall needed Christ, the new Adam, in order to re-establish her in her initial position as mediator between God and his creation. This I take to be the real meaning of what Arthur Hilary Armstrong had in mind in saying that "there is here a new and radical sort of religious anthropocentricism, which may have had far-reaching consequences."[111]

If that is the case, there emerge serious doubts about the accuracy of Shaw's claim that "(. . .) Dionysius placed them [the sacred symbols that Origen had recognized within the natural world] solely within the Church, and by shifting the context of theurgy from the natural to an ecclesiastic world he necessarily changed the very nature of the 'divine work'."[112] Obviously, and in the light of Florovsky's passage above, the distinction between natural and ecclesiastic world in Dionysius is simply a false one. Neither the *ekklēsia* is something other than the natural cosmos, nor the very nature of the "divine work" is anything other than God's providential, creative, sustaining, salvific, and deifying activity of the very cosmos. Consequently, the Areopagite does not implement any shifting of the context of theurgy from "the natural to an ecclesiastic world," which would necessarily imply a change in the very nature of the "divine work."[113] In his mind there is no distinction between natural and ecclesiastical cosmos: it is one and the very same cosmos.[114]

Conclusions

The unbiased reader of Dionysius who chooses to interpret his works by focusing on the tradition the Areopagite adheres to rather than on the "external" similarities emerging from the vocabulary and the terminological apparatus of Neoplatonism he makes use of, would be alerted to the misunderstandings that bind part of the literature. At the heart of such miscomprehensions of the Dionysian universe one finds the identification of Dionysian theurgy with the long Neoplatonic and Hellenic–broadly speaking–theurgic tradition and practice.[115] To see

Dionysian theurgy through Neoplatonic lenses amounts to considering θεουργία as a mere human activity, even if performed by men who have been purified according to the Neoplatonic rites appropriate for that matter.[116] This would not be far away from taking theurgy according to the Areopagite as another "special branch of magic," to borrow the provocative words of Eric Robertson Dodds.[117] If one accepted the above, one would necessarily be bound to identify theurgy with hierurgy, thus dangerously circumventing the fundamental Dionysian distinction between the two.

What has been argued throughout this chapter is that the Areopagite does not employ θεουργία on Neoplatonic or other pagan mystical grounds. The content of the term is radically transformed by him in order to depict a reality unconceivable within Neoplatonism. As Stock puts it, "Dionysius uses both the Christian and the Neoplatonic traditions to create a new concept of *theourgia* in which the aesthetic value of the ritual plays an important philosophical role."[118] In other words, it is possible that a term receives a new content, deriving from the specifics of a radically different world view. For Dionysius is clear that the world does neither derive emanatively from the One nor expand downwards through a manifold of divine entities with an active role in the formation of the cosmos, as it is the case with the Proclean interpretation of the cosmology of the *Timaeus*.[119] One might rightly object that the principle of *creatio ex nihilo* is not found in the Corpus; yet, the Dionysian setting is rather a creationist one.[120] What is more, the cosmos does not owe its being to a multiplicity of Gods but to the one God who *theurgises*, creates entirely and exclusively without the aid of intermediate deities.[121]

The Areopagite is not a theurgist in the sense the term receives within Iamblichean Neoplatonic theurgy. For him, theurgy is all the rituals of the Christian tradition, the Sacraments, the most significant being the liturgy (σύναξις), which stands in remembrance (ἀνάμνησις) of the earthly acts of Christ. The performance of the rituals, as Dionysius explains, is an act of hierurgy enacted by the hierarch and/or the priests (ἱερουργοί). The Areopagite is very careful to never call the reception – and further transmission to the *plērōma* of the Church – of the sacraments *theurgiai*, but *hierurgiai*. Thus, theurgy is not a human activity but it is the divine activity received by the humans, and this reception is precisely an act of hierurgy. Therefore, hierurgy could not be taken as a term alternative to theurgy, as is the case in Iamblichus' theurgic account. The Areopagite should be credited with the novel distinction between the two: *divine activity* is to be *hymned* as *theurgy*, whereas *human activity*, either within the sacraments, or as participation in divinity through prayer, is to be *praised* as *hierurgy*. Moreover, Dionysius should be seen as a theurgist "by grace" on the grounds of synergy between God and man, and in the perspective of deification, which springs from God's Incarnation, Passion, Death, and Resurrection.

The major Dionysian contribution that derives as a corollary of his notion of theurgy is cosmological. It is about the enrichment of our understanding of the constitution of the cosmos. For him the cosmos is not dropped and abandoned in being, as Heidegger thought, but rather responding to a *klēsis* that is both a renewal of it and the revelation of its origin and destination. The Dionysian

universe, and the natural cosmos indeed, is a dynamic universe in movement towards an infinite reality that is theurgically established and constantly fulfilled. Thus, nature and all material and natural symbols are not merely *synthēmata* to be intellectually conceived in order to facilitate a certain change of the psychological status; they are imprints of an ongoing ontological innovation and enrichment of the entire creation, of all particulars and universals. Dionysian theurgy aims precisely at the salvation of man and the entire creation. As such, it has "no parallel in the theurgy of Proclus or Late Neoplatonism in general."[122] This novelty certainly goes far beyond the (humanly governed) institutional capacities of any Church.[123] Besides, one should not forget that it was precisely the "institutional church" of those times that rejected and crucified Him Who is the source of the Church, the source of Dionysian theurgy.

Notes

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2 Dionysius, *EH* I.1; PG 3: 372a.

3 Cf. Vanneste 1959; Saffrey 1966; Saffrey 1982; Sorabji 1990; Shaw 1999; Dillon 2014. See also the famous *dictum* of Anders Nygren (*Agape and Eros*) who built upon Martin Luther and said about the Areopagite that "the fundamental Neoplatonism is but scantily covered with an exceedingly thin Christian veneer." For this quotation from Nygren and other interesting remarks on his view of Dionysius as "platonising" rather than "christianising," see Golitzin 1999: 131–133.

4 Indeed, the literature is growing. I simply refer, in a comparative mode, to the overall placement of Dionysian studies with regards to the sum of studies on Neoplatonism.

5 For instance, Dillon 2014: 111–112. For a collection of central studies on this issue, see Burns 2004: 111, n. 1. To my knowledge, the most recent work focusing on theurgy in the pagan world is the detailed study of Crystal Addey *Divination and Theurgy in Neoplatonism: Oracles of the Gods*, cf. Addey 2014, which contains a rich bibliography on Neoplatonic theurgy.

6 Burns holds the view that "it is only by examining Proclus' practice beyond his treatises, in their sociohistorical context, that Pseudo-Dionysius' reasons for changing the Iamblicho-Proclean theurgic model become clear," cf. Burns 2004: 113.

7 Sorabji 1990: 11–12.

8 This reflects Shaw's conclusive argument, in Shaw 1999: 598–599.

9 Andrew Louth has made some very clear points with regard to Dionysius' originality in relation to Neoplatonism, in Louth 1989: 84–87. See also Florovsky 1987: 204–229 and Golitzin 1999. Vasilakis espouses this view in his chapter *On the Meaning of Hierarchy in Dionysius the Areopagite*, in the present volume.

10 Dionysius, *Ep.* 9.1, Heil and Ritter 1991: 198.3–5; PG 3: 1108a. This is nothing other than the Last Supper offered by Christ to His disciples, shortly before the betrayal and the Passion.

11 Dionysius, *Ep.* 4, Heil and Ritter 1991: 161.5–10; PG 3: 1072c.

12 This has been noticed by the Dionysian scholarship more than a century ago, with the studies of Hugo Koch and Josef Stiglmayr, cf. Perczel 2000: 491. See also, Louth 1986: 432; Louth 1989: 81; Golitzin 1999: 133–134, and Dillon 2014: 112.

13 John Rist has something interesting to say about how Dionysius uses Neoplatonic language in a different conceptual orientation, in Rist 2010: 245–246.

14 Vladimir Lossky moves even further, when he notes that "we must not imagine that Christian and pagans lived in water-tight compartments, especially in Alexandria where both participated in the same culture, in the same intellectual life," cf. Lossky 1983: 67. Lossky regards the community of language and the common methodology as two aspects of the natural kinship of the same cultural tradition shared by both the pagan and Christian contemplatives of Alexandria (*ibid.*: 68). So, by speaking of "different orientation of the use of a common language," I refer to what Lossky points out as "different religious frameworks of the same thems of Hellenistic spirituality," (cf. *ibid*.: 67).

15 Cf. *ibid*.: 121–122.

16 1 Cor 9:20–22: "καὶ ἐγενόμην τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις ὡς Ἰουδαῖος, ἵνα Ἰουδαίους κερδήσω· τοῖς ὑπὸ νόμον ὡς ὑπὸ νόμον, ἵνα τοὺς ὑπὸ νόμον κερδήσω· (. . .) τοῖς πᾶσι γέγονα τὰ πάντα, ἵνα πάντως τινὰς σώσω." Most of the translations use the verb "win" to render "κερδήσω." I think the "to bring with me" is a better rendition. I very much agree with Dimitrios A. Vasilakis, who comments, in this respect of the relation of the unknown author of the *CD* with St Paul that "historical fiction is different to spiritual indebtedness." Cf. Vasilakis' chapter in this volume, n. 44.

17 Plato, *Epinomis* 987de: "λάβωμεν δὲ ὡς ὅτιπερ ἂν οἱ Ἕλληνες βαρβάρων παραλάβωσι, κάλλιον τοῦτο εἰς τέλος ἀπεργάζονται." Although *Epinomis* is labelled as a spurious work (Diogenes Laertius (Plato, III.37, and 46) registers that some people say that the author of the Epinomis was Plato's disciple Philippus of Opus). In any case, I find this passage perfectly illustrating Plato's own method and practice.

18 I personally prefer such an interpretative possibility for a productive *synthesis* in Dionysius; it goes beyond a rather superficial view and "comparison" of the Christian and Platonist tradition in terms of superiority of the former, as asserted in Wear and Dillon 2007: 12. Besides, this attitude is not exclusively Dionysian. It is already present in the thought and the works of St Basil the Great.

19 Acts 17:23: "(. . .) διερχόμενος γὰρ καὶ ἀναθεωρῶν τὰ σεβάσματα ὑμῶν εὗρον καὶ βωμὸν ἐν ᾧ ἐπεγέγραπτο, ἀγνώστῳ θεῷ. ὃν οὖν ἀγνοοῦντες εὐσεβεῖτε, τοῦτον ἐγὼ καταγγέλλω ὑμῖν."

20 Cf. Dionysius, *CH* IV.1, Heil and Ritter 1991: 20.9–11; PG 3: 177c. Although one might have wished to have a more explicit statement by Dionysius on the *creatio ex nihilo* of the cosmos, I think it is safe to admit that, even in an implicit manner, the Areopagite adheres to the creation of the cosmos by God out of nothing. Louth (1989: 85), notes that Dionysius "never speaks of creation *ex nihilo*, even though by this time the idea of creation out of nothing had become the normal and accepted way in which Christians expressed their belief in creation." For the possibility of maintaining a creationist view within the phenomenally emanationist Neoplatonic setting in the Areopagite's works, see Damian 2011: 96–97. On the possibility of taking παραγωγή in Dionysius as implying creation out of nothing, see Golitzin 2013: 105–113. For an inquiry into a Christian orthodox doctrine of

creation in the Areopagite, see Tollefsen 2008: 113 ff. The reader would greatly benefit from Tollefsen's chapter on *Proclus, Philoponus, and Maximus: The Paradigm of the World and Temporal Beginning*, in this volume, where Tollefsen compares Neoplatonic and Christian doctrines of creation. Following his argument that "the classical Christian doctrine of creation reached its completion in major thinkers of the fourth century," it is plausible to claim, I think, that the Areopagite could but have adhered to this doctrine, as well. This claim could also be supported by Brown Dewhurst's chapter in the present, where she argues for fundamental divergences between Proclus and St Maximus the Confessor in their views on the origin of the cosmos. The given agreement of Dionysius with St Maximus on the existence of one Triune God who creates without the aid of intermediate deities would be enough to conclude that the Areopagite adheres to *creation* rather, than to *emanation*. See also, infra n. 121.

21 Rorem admits, though, that the similarities between Iamblichus and Dionysius do not necessarily mean that the Areopagite read *De Mysteriis*. Cf. Burns 2004: 112.

22 Louth 1986: 432.

23 Struck 2001: 25–26. One could, for instance, think of St Gregory of Nyssa, who in many regards has been much influential to Dionysius, cf. Golitzin 1999: 136 and Florovsky 1987: 213. But as the Lexicon Gregorianum shows, there is no use of the term θεουργία by Gregory. However the case may be, I would agree with Rorem's conclusion that "Dionysius' ritual theory must be understood 'in general (. . .) in the context of basically patristic precedents'." Cf. Struck 2001: 26.

24 Cf. Burns 2004: 121.

25 Dillon 1973: 29.

26 Rorem 1984.

27 Shaw 1999: 582. The tripartite division of mankind and souls is also present in pre-Iamblichean traditions, such as Valentinians, Sethians and Hermetists. Dylan Burns has summed up the arguments of Rorem and Shaw about the aspects of Iamblichean theurgy that, according to them, are replicated by Dionysius, cf. Burns 2004: 112.

28 Note, for instance, the divergences between Proclus and Plotinus on the question of matter as badness, as it is specially treated in Emilsson's chapter *Plotinus' Doctrine of Badness as Matter in Ennead I.8*., in this volume.

29 See passage T2 below.

30 Burns has some useful notes about the tendency of comparing Dionysius with Iamblichus, and not Proclus, on theurgy, in Burns 2004: 113 and n. 9. It would also be fruitful to explore other possible reasons for a closer relation of Dionysius to Iamblichus rather than to Plotinus, in the perspective of what Chlup calls Iamblichean 'eastern' Neoplatonism, cf. Chlup 2012: 18, that flourished in the 4th century Syria.

31 Louth 1986: 434.

32 See, for instance, *De Myst*. III.11, 125.4–5; III.24–25, 157.12–14; III.27, 165.7–10; IV.8, 192.1–3; V.10, 210.11–12; X.3, 287.15–288.1; Clarke *et al*. 2003: 146–147, 178–179, 186–187, 214–216, 240–241, 346–347. See also Shaw 1999: 596, and Shaw 1995: 86–87. Crystal Addey notes that *epitēdeiotēs* in Iamblichus summons "the ritual, intellectual and ethical qualities which were considered to be essential for the theurgist to develop," and she argues that the term accounts for the difference between theurgy and sorcery (γοητεία). Cf. Addey 2014: 27 and 35.

33 For an analysis of "ἐπιτηδειότης," a justification of the English specific rendition of the term, and insights on "aptitude" in Late Antique and Early Christian thought, see Pavlos 2017a and 2017b.

34 Cf. Emilsson and Strange 2015: 28. See also Schroeder 2014, an excellent piece on the influence of Alexander to Plotinus; although it does not treat *epitēdeiotēs* explicitly, the specific influence can be extracted as a corollary from Schroeder's analysis.

35 I investigate this further in my doctoral dissertation, "The concept of Aptitude (Ἐπιτηδειότης) in Late Antique and Early Christian Thought," at the Department of Philosophy, University of Oslo. For sporadic but substantial remarks on *epitēdeiotēs* in the thought of St Maximus the Confessor, see Tollefsen 2008: 185 ff.
36 On *epitēdeiotēs* in a physical context, see Sambursky 1962: 104–109. For remarks on *epitēdeiotēs* in Philoponus' cosmological account, see Tollefsen's chapter in this volume.
37 Plotinus, *Enn.* VI.4.11, 3–4; VI.4.15, 1–6; 12–13. Cf. Emilsson and Strange 2015: 26–28.
38 Rarely, however, Iamblichus employs the term as associated to an agent rather than a patient. Cf. Clarke *et al*. 2003: 217.
39 Sambursky 1962: 106.
40 Iamblichus, *De Myst*. III.11, 124.14–125.6; Clarke *et al*. 146–147.
41 I am basically commenting on the last sentence of passage T1, which I have added in Greek. It is however possible to discern the "normal" Plotinian influence on Iamblichus' understanding of *epitēdeiotēs*, when Iamblichus refers to prayer. He asserts that prayer is effective in that it "enlarges very greatly our soul's receptivity to the gods, reveals to men the life of the gods, accustoms their eyes to the brightness of divine light, and gradually brings to perfection the capacity of our faculties for contact with the gods." Cf. Wear and Dillon 2007: 63. Here we have the original Plotinian motive of a certain (innate) potency that is supported "internally" – not through material items – by *epitēdeiotēs*. This Iamblichean passage is interesting also because it illustrates the dynamic character of *epitēdeiotēs* that affects potency in two ways: it both leads it to actualisation and increases it.
42 Dionysius, *Ep.* 8.2, Heil and Ritter 1991: 180.12–16. Cf. Wear and Dillon 2007: 95. Interestingly, Iamblichus does not maintain the Plotinian picture that is apparently preserved by Dionysius when the latter asserts that there is an approximation with the divine not in spatial terms but according to the aptitude for receiving God. Plotinus originally illustrates this idea in *Enn.* VI.4.15.
43 Iamblichus, *De Myst*. V.23, 233.9–13; Clarke *et al*. 268–269.
44 Cf. Plotinus, *Enn.* II.9.
45 Dodds asserts that the term "theurgy" is not found anywhere in Plotinus' *Enneads*, cf. Coughlin 2006: 150. Louth (1986: 432) notes that, "Plotinus had no time for theurgy: the world θεουργία is not used in the *Enneads*, he uses the older, derogatory word, γοητεία, 'sorcery'." See also Rist 2010: 244, and Mazur 2004.
46 Cf. Clarke *et al*. 2003: 269. My understanding is that Iamblichus qualifies the aforementioned material objects as sacred, perfect and divine already before, and apart from, their specific theurgic composition and transformation into a receptacle.
47 Shaw 1999: 596.
48 Iamblichus, *De Myst*. V.18–19, 225.1–4; Clarke *et al*. 2003: 256–259.
49 The integration of theurgy in Proclean Neoplatonism is perhaps the most fruitful evidence to this. Cf. Van den Berg 2014: 261.
50 Indeed, it would be somewhat oversimplifying to pose a radical distinction between theory (θεωρία), or theology (θεολογία) and theurgy. For Dionysius, who had seen *theourgia* as the consummation of *theologia*, this would have been impossible. This Iamblichean passage confirms Zeke Mazur, who argues that "*theōria* and *theurgia* are ambiguous categories that admit of some overlap." Thus, contemplation cannot be understood as simple intellection, just as theurgy does not merely designate external or material ritual practices, cf. Coughlin 2006: 151. At the same time, Iamblichus is well aware of the distinct roles of theology, theurgy and philosophy, when he promises that he shall provide explanations to Porphyry's attacks in a manner proper to the respective question, cf. Coughlin 2006: 151.

51 Iamblichus, *De Myst*. VI.6, 246.12–247.2; Clarke *et al.* 2003: 286–287. I add the Greek text here because it bears similarities with a significant Dionysian extract we examine in passage T6: "Ὁ θεουργὸς διὰ τὴν δύναμιν τῶν ἀπορρήτων συνθημάτων, οὐκέτι ὡς ἄνθρωπος οὐδ᾽ ὡς ἀνθρωπίνῃ ψυχῇ χρώμενος ἐπιτάττει τοῖς κοσμικοῖς, ἀλλ᾽ ὡς ἐν τῇ τῶν θεῶν τάξει προϋπάρχων μείζοσι τῆς καθ᾽ ἑαυτὸν οὐσίας ἐπανατάσεσι χρῆται (. . .)."

52 Needless to mention the enthusiasm I experienced when in my first reading of *De Mysteriis* I realised how much of pagan reality is preserved in the series of comics "Astérix," by René Goscinny and Albert Uderzo. There, the equivalent to the Colophonian oracle's water mentioned by Iamblichus in *De Mysteriis*, is the magic broth made by the druid with an arcane recipe that only he knows.

53 Two remarks here. The first is that such a being, perfect God and perfectly man, would sound to Iamblichean ears at least as strange as it would sound to Plotinus' the inclusion and identification of the absolute Universal, the One, to an absolute particular, a man, and this made of without the aid of any mystical ascent. Secondly, the reader should not think that I use – arbitrarily, one might say – the Council of Chalcedon as a means to heal what has been admitted by Georges Florovsky as "a certain vagueness of Dionysius' christological ideas," cf. Florovsky 1987: 225. Rather, I do wish to stress in this way the permanence of theurgic identity in Areopagite's *theourgos* against the temporality of theurgic properties in Iamblichus'.

54 Dionysius, *EH* III, Heil and Ritter 1991: 79.1–94.22. Cf. Louth 1989: 60.

55 *Ibid*.

56 Louth 1986: 434.

57 On the relation of this initial status of sacraments to the later tradition of the Church, see Louth 1989: 57–58.

58 Indicatively, see Florovsky 1987: 225.

59 Cf. for instance, Grillmeier and Hainthaler 2013: 311–342.

60 Dionysius, *EH* I.1, Heil and Ritter 1991: 63.12–64.4; PG 3: 372a; Parker 1897: 168.

61 Dionysian theology stems from the Scriptural truth that is tirelessly repeated throughout the Corpus. The Areopagite acknowledges one Triune God. In *EH* he affirms the triadic in unity blessedness of the beyond all Godhead as the singular cause of beings, the source of life, the principle of hierarchy and the essence of goodness: "ταύτης ἀρχὴ τῆς ἱεραρχίας ἡ πηγὴ τῆς ζωῆς ἡ οὐσία τῆς ἀγαθότητος ἡ μία τῶν ὄντων αἰτία, τριάς, (. . .) ταύτῃ δὲ τῇ πάντων ἐπέκεινα θεαρχικωτάτῃ μακαριότητι τῇ τρισσῇ τῇ μονάδι (. . .)." Cf. Dionysius, *EH* I.3, Heil and Ritter 1991: 66.6–9; PG 3: 373cd.

62 Dionysius, *Ep*. 4, Heil and Ritter 1991: 161.5–10; PG 3: 1072bc; Parker 1897: 95: "Καὶ γὰρ, ἵνα συνελόντες εἴπωμεν, οὐδὲ ἄνθρωπος ἦν, οὐχ ὡς μὴ ἄνθρωπος, ἀλλ᾽ ὡς ἐξ ἀνθρώπων ἀνθρώπων ἐπέκεινα καὶ ὑπὲρ ἄνθρωπον ἀληθῶς ἄνθρωπος γεγονώς, καὶ τὸ λοιπὸν οὐ κατὰ θεὸν τὰ θεῖα δράσας, οὐ τὰ ἀνθρώπεια κατὰ ἄνθρωπον, ἀλλ᾽ ἀνδρωθέντος θεοῦ, καινήν τινα τὴν θεανδρικὴν ἐνέργειαν ἡμῖν πεπολιτευμένος." Note the dialectics of affirmations and negations with regard to the nature(s) of Christ, in this passage: they demonstrate an understanding of "theurgist" by the Areopagite radically contrasting the Iamblichean theurgist who "commands cosmic entities no longer as a human being or employing a human soul (. . .)", in passage T4.

63 Saffrey 1966: 98.

64 Dionysius, *CH* IV, Heil and Ritter 1991: 22.25–23.5; PG 3: 181b; Parker 1897: 158.

65 Dionysius, *EH* III, θεωρία 5, Heil and Ritter 1991: 84.18–21; PG 3: 432b. I use the translation of the passage made by Struck, in Struck 2001: 31. Notably, the term τελεσιουργία is employed by Iamblichus in several places in the *De Mysteriis.*

66 Louth 1986: 434. Louth's claim has been given a solid grounding after the work on Dionysian Christology by Grillmeier and Hainthaler 2013.

67 Florovsky 1987: 211. I am very grateful to fr. Johannes Johansen, rector of the Norwegian Orthodox Church of St Nicholas in Oslo and Christ's Transfiguration Parish

in Rogaland, and to Torleif Thomas Grønnestad, for granting me access to the Stavanger Orthodox Library, whereby I borrowed a copy of the otherwise hardly accessible Collected Works of fr. Georges Florovsky.

68 I found the analysis of this subject in Emilsson 1999 very illuminating.
69 For the time being, I am happy to leave this claim in its present form without further justification.
70 See respective lemmas, in Nasta 2013: 3.
71 Florovsky 1987: 211.
72 See relevant remarks on "synergy" in Vasilakis' chapter in this volume, nn. 45 and 96.
73 Florovsky 1987: 216.
74 *Ibid*.
75 Dionysius, *DN* XI.5, Suchla 1990: 221.5–10; PG 3: 953a.
76 See also the section on *Theourgia – Hierourgia* (Chapter 7), in Wear and Dillon 2007: 99–115.
77 Dionysius, *EH* III, Θεωρία 4, Heil and Ritter 1991: 84.1–6; PG 3: 429d; Parker 1897: 202.
78 Dionysius, *Ep.* 9.1, Heil and Ritter 1991: 198.3–5; PG 3: 1108a.
79 Gontikakis 1984: 61–62.
80 *Ibid*. A modern "theurgist" would also claim the same about the revival of Iamblichean theurgy nowadays. The difference lies on what exactly is acted.
81 John 14:19: "Ἔτι μικρὸν καὶ ὁ κόσμος με οὐκέτι θεωρεῖ, ὑμεῖς δὲ θεωρεῖτέ με, ὅτι ἐγὼ ζῶ καὶ ὑμεῖς ζήσετε." I use the text from Novum Testamentum Graece, edited by Nestle-Aland.
82 Louth 1986: 435.
83 I would partially agree with Burns, who argues that "when he [Dionysius] argues that 'theurgy is the consummation of theology,' he refers to a systems of ritual liturgics in which the priest not only needs to be saved through theurgic symbols, but needs to save others by using them properly, as prescribed." The terms "save others" and "using" that Burns employs, assign the Dionysian priest with a task that I do not think it is prescribed by the Areopagite. Cf. Burns 2004: 122 and n. 49.
84 Cf. Russell 2006: 258.
85 Cf. Iamblichus, *De Myst*. I.21, 14: "οἷς καὶ τὰ μὲν ἄφθεγκτα διὰ συμβόλων ἀπορρήτων ἐκφωνεῖται."
86 Wear and Dillon 2007: 102.
87 Dionysius, *EH* III.10, Heil and Ritter 1991: 90.9–10: PG 3: 440b: "Οὕτω τοῖς θείοις ὁ ἱεράρχης ἑνοῦται καὶ τὰς ἱερὰς θεουργίας ὑμνήσας ἱερουργεῖ τὰ θειότατα καὶ ὑπ᾽ ὄψιν ἄγει τὰ ὑμνημένα."
88 John Finamore notes further that, for Iamblichus, "the largest segment of humanity is held down by nature, is subject to fate, and never rises. Other human beings can and do make progress through theurgical ascent." Cf. Finamore 2014: 289. By "kata symbebēkos" I refer to the minority of humans identified above by Finamore.
89 Louth 1986: 434.
90 Cf. the excellent illustration of this cosmic freedom, in Florovsky 1987: 218.
91 One may reasonably think that, in such a cosmic setting, the Neoplatonic generalisation of Stoic *sympatheia*, that applies to the entire cosmos and opens room to Iamblichean theurgy, needs a radical revision.
92 Cf. Ivanovic 2017: 150.
93 It is a central conviction of the Areopagite, shared by St Maximus the Confessor as well, that synergy between God and man is the foundation for deification of the latter, cf. Ivanovic 2019: 210.
94 Shaw 1999: 589.
95 *Ibid*.: 587–590.
96 This is the meaning of the Dionysian predicate "θεουργικός" referring to the deification of the human being. See also Wear and Dillon 2007: 102.

97 This does not contradict my previous claim that for Dionysius the only theurgist is Christ. For deification of the human being amounts to likeness to Christ in His complete Glory (as far as possible), a glimpse of which was offered to few disciples, the day of Transfiguration. And so long human beings become Christlike they become theurgists.
98 Shaw 1999: 595.
99 *Ibid*.: 573.
100 I very much suspect that *apologetics* are to be found on both sides of the river, both on the Neoplatonist and the Christian shore. In general, the apologetics, though often under attack, are neither bad people nor inaccurate with regard to the evidence. Socrates, for instance, was such a person, as Plato reminds us in his *Apology of Socrates*.
101 Shaw 1999: 595–596.
102 In the tendency of the literature to bring together Dionysius and Proclus (and Iamblichus) on theurgy, Christ is regarded as a Dionysian symbol, cf. Burns 2004: 125. But this raises the question whether Christ is a symbol, and, if yes, of what. For the Areopagite Christ is a being, perfect God and man. A symbol refers by definition to something beyond itself. But is there anything beyond, or apart from, Christ to be symbolised by Him? I think Dionysius' answer, as it comes out from his Corpus, is no. If that is the case, then Christ could be taken as a symbol only on the basis of being a symbol of Himself. But, then, are we not far way from Neoplatonism? Perhaps the reasons that prompt one to think of Christ as a symbol in a Neoplatonic manner, could be understood on the basis of the Dionysian method of paraphrasing respective passages from Proclus' *Platonic Theology*, in which the role of Jesus is analogous to that of Plato. But, again, these analogies hide fundamental divergences that lead me to the view I presented above. István Perczel's analysis is very fruitful and I shall only borrow one point to support my claim: "In other words, he [Jesus] is not only the principal Revelator as is Plato in Proclus' system, but also the Revealed and the Revelation itself." Cf. Perczel 2000: 501–502. Perczel concludes his comparative reading by noting that "instead of [Jesus] being a messenger of the higher beings [as Plato is], he [Jesus] is their principle", in *ibid*.
103 Shaw 1999: 595.
104 One may check the instances where the author of the *CD* employs the term σῶμα. But what I find sufficiently arguing for the Dionysian anticipation of the body's inclusion in deification – which also implies resurrection of the dead – is the eschatological passage from the *DN* that connects deification with Christ's Transfiguration, in *DN* I.4, Suchla 1990: 114.7–115.5; PG 3: 592c.
105 Shaw 1999: 595.
106 *Ibid*.: 596.
107 See n. 78 in Vasilakis' chapter in this volume, for details about the disputed label of the *EH* treatise.
108 Florovsky 1987: 217.
109 See also Vasilakis' chapter in this volume and especially n. 24.
110 There is no passage in the *CD* where Dionysius employs theurgy dissociated from Christ. Cf. Burns 2004: 125 and n. 66.
111 Armstrong 1973: 11.
112 Shaw 1999: 598.
113 Cf. Burns 2004: 127, who builds upon Shaw. The latter has a very interesting reference to St Maximus' the Confessor's *Mystagogia,* a work that, indeed, can be seen as a commentary on Dionysius' *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*. There Maximus refers to the church as an "image of the sensible world" and he says that "the world can be thought of as a church," cf. Shaw 1999: 598, n. 105. Although I could not supply myself with

the translation of *Mystagogia* Shaw had at his disposal, I believe the renditions above, apart from being selective, do not perfectly reflect the Greek text, where Maximus says precisely the following (bold phrases are made intentionally to correspond to the phrases Shaw refers to, as above): "*Ὅτι καὶ μόνου τοῦ αἰσθητοῦ κόσμου ἐστὶν εἰκὼν, ἡ ἁγία τοῦ Θεοῦ Ἐκκλησία*. Καὶ αὖθις μόνου τοῦ αἰσθητοῦ κόσμου καθ᾽ ἑαυτὸν τὴν ἁγίαν τοῦ Θεοῦ Ἐκκλησίαν εἶναι σύμβολον ἔφασκεν· ὡς οὐρανὸν μὲν τὸ θεῖον ἱερατεῖον ἔχουσαν· γῆν δὲ τὴν εὐπρέπειαν τοῦ ναοῦ κεκτημένην. Ὡσαύτως δὲ *καὶ τὸν κόσμον ὑπάρχειν Ἐκκλησίαν*· ἱερατείῳ μὲν ἐοικότα τὸν οὐρανὸν ἔχοντα, ναῷ δὲ τὴν κατὰ γῆν διακόσμησιν." (*Myst*. Ch. 3, PG 91: 672a). The reader might discern certain concealments that allow Shaw to conclude, by means of a selective reading of this Maximian passage that "the world as church or temple is perfectly consistent with the principles of Iamblichean theurgy, so long as *our* church is not the *only* church." I fully align myself with Shaw, however, in his objection about the church; I agree with him, since for both Dionysius and Maximus, the church is definitely not the one he rightly feels allergic about.

114 The epistemic implications of this identification are enormous, but this would need a separate study.

115 For instance, Shaw's introductory wonder, in Shaw 1999, is "why are Christian theologians reluctant to admit that Dionysius was a theurgist." By "theurgist" Shaw refers to the Iamblichean definition of a theurgist as a man who performs theurgic rituals.

116 Iamblichus, *De Myst*. V.18–19, 225.1–4; Clarke *et al*. 2003: 256–259.

117 Dodds 1963: 283. On the origins and the meaning of the term "μαγεία," see Bull 2018: 398–404. Bull builds on the definition of "religion" as "an institution consisting of culturally patterned interaction with culturally postulated superhuman beings," by Melford Spiro, and provides the following definition of "magic": "then magic should be considered a subgroup of religion, since it consists of a specific form of interaction with the culturally postulated beings. If religion is 'institution', then magic is specific rituals performed within or – perhaps more commonly – on the fringes of said institution." I do not mean to say that Iamblichus considers theurgy as magic. He is quite clear in that theurgy goes far beyond magic or "sorcery" (γοητεία, the term Plotinus uses in his *Enneads*), the latter relying on sympathies within the material world; for him, theurgy requires the involvement of the divine will of gods. I simply mean that, from a Christian point of view, Iamblichean theurgy is about magic so long as it does not acknowledge a single divine activity of one God; a singular activity that is, the more, not dependent on an evocation of a manifold of deities. For the relationship between theurgy, magic and religious practices in Late Antiquity, see Addey 2014: 32–38.

118 Stock 2013: 14.

119 Unlike the *Timaeus*, and the entire Neoplatonic tradition, Dionysius has a creator god who brings the universe into being theurgically, without the aid of subordinate gods, cf. Lossky 1983: 124–125.

120 See nn. 20 and 121.

121 I fully agree with István Perczel who argues that in "Dionysius' Christian Platonist system (. . .) the creating activity is not distributed among different divine entities or hypostases like in Proclus, but is attributed to the highest and universal cause of all things. Proclus' Demiurge is a subordinate deity occupying a rather modest rank in the Diadochus' sophisticated pantheon. But Dionysius' "Producer (ὑποστάτης) of all things" is the supreme Godhead (. . .)." Cf. Perczel 2000: 494.

122 I think here Burns is absolutely right. Cf. Burns 2004: 127.

123 I very much agree with Shaw's criticism of the "institutional church," cf. Shaw 1999: 599.

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10 On the meaning of hierarchy in Dionysius the Areopagite*

Dimitrios A. Vasilakis

In terms of intellectual history the notion of hierarchy, like so many others, derives from Neoplatonism, whose founder is considered to be Plotinus (204/5–270).[1] Yet, although the term "hierarch" was already used in Late Antiquity,[2] the word "hierarchy" itself was most probably coined by the unknown author of the Areopagitic Corpus, Dionysius,[3] whose activity is situated roughly in the beginning of the sixth century.[4] In this chapter I will present Dionysius' understanding of the term. In so doing, I will challenge the view that the notion of hierarchy is equivalent to stratification: that within a set of entities (or types of entity) each entity is higher or lower than the others, according to its power, priority or merit. While this is an aspect of hierarchy in Dionysius, first and foremost the term expresses the desire for godlikeness (upwards orientation). The goal of the well-ordered system is achieved when the members of the higher strata act in such a way as to bring the members of the lower strata to their appropriate godlikeness, thus satisfying that desire. I will establish this point by examining representative passages from Dionysius' two *Hierarchies*,[5] the *Celestial* and the *Ecclesiastical*.[6]

Some preliminaries are needed. Dionysius is a Christian author, but his philosophical background is pagan Neoplatonism.[7] A fundamental scheme he has critically borrowed from the Neoplatonists, and especially Proclus (412–485), is the triad of immanence, procession and reversion.[8] In broad brushstrokes, at the top of the Neoplatonic system God (identified with the Good) remains in Himself (immanence), while giving forth an activity that bestows existence upon a plurality of entities (procession). This is how stratification arises. The lower the strata, the greater the degree of multiplicity. The perfection of each entity is achieved through its return to the First Principle, as far as possible (reversion). In other words, God is the efficient cause (the cause of procession), as well as the final cause (the cause of reversion).

Proclus, exploiting Platonic themes, expresses this scheme in erotic terms. Eros, in this case a desire for return to the Deity, presupposes a kind of providence that divine entities have for their inferiors, which Proclus calls providential eros. Seeing a link to Christian ideas about love, there is no surprise that Dionysius adopts and builds on Proclus' erotic terminology.[9] For him, God has generated the multiplicity of our cosmos (procession), which makes it possible for the cosmos to orientate itself towards Deity (reversion). This means that God is a "manic"

lover, who does not stand still in His perfection, but "goes out" of Himself to meet what is outside Him, i.e. the beloved, so that the latter returns to the former. The paradigm of this "self-emptying" love (κένωσις) is the person of Christ with His characteristic "philanthropy" (love for mankind).[10]

Let us now take up the notion upon which Dionysius builds his understanding of hierarchy. Either in the first century AD, the time of Dionysius' persona, or in the sixth century, when the corpus was written, a "hierarch" denoted a religious leader. This is also what a straightforward etymology of the name would suggest (ἱερὸς ἄρχων). Such leadership must have included teaching, both doctrinal and pastoral, as well as the performance of rituals with the aim of purification, so that the religious group could attain some kind of communion with the divinity. So the hierarch is not only a person of high office, superior to others in religious matters; he also assumes the role of a father, who cares about his people and via certain activities attempts to impart to them his desire for God. In other words, a hierarch does not resemble a tyrant or despot, but a providential and loving God. He is not like Thales in the famous digression of the *Theaetetus*,[11] a philosopher who looks at the sky while being blind to earthly things, but like the philosopher of the *Republic* who descends into the cave in order to educate his former fellow-prisoners.[12] This is confirmed by the following Dionysian passage:[13]

> For also the wise about divine matters (οἱ θεόσοφοι) have called Melchisedek not only a lover of God (φιλόθεον), but also a priest – [and this] not for any chance reason; rather so that they reveal clearly to the mindful (ἐχέφροσιν) that not only did he return (ἐπέστραπτο) to God, who really is, but additionally that for [the sake of] others he, like a hierarch (ὡς ἱεράρχης), led (ἠγεῖτο) the elevation (τῆς . . . ἀναγωγῆς) to the true and only divine principle (θεαρχίαν).[14]

Consequently, we see that a hierarch affords an alternative etymology: a person who leads his people to the Principle of all (ἀρχή) in a sacred way (ἱερῶς).[15] We should naturally expect that Dionysian "hierarchy" tracks this fundamental idea, keeping in mind that, contrary to our modern use, it is not simply about rank in power. Stratification is only a precondition: we need something lower and something higher if the latter is to lead the former to God. In keeping with this, the two *Hierarchies* do not simply focus on the structured levels of the church or the angels but unearth the symbolism of the sacraments (in *EH*) and the scriptural, as well as pictorial representation of angels (in *CH*).

I end this introduction with a disclaimer. Although this chapter is not a systematic comparative study between pagan Neoplatonism and Dionysius, in the subsequent pages the reader will find scattered relevant comparisons. A difficulty that calls for a separate and wider study which would examine hierarchy in both Dionysius and (pagan) Neoplatonism is that Neoplatonism in itself is not as uniform as one might think. For instance, Plotinus' brand of Neoplatonism is not as "baroque," i.e. complex, as that of Proclus; what is more, Plotinus is more optimistic about the level of cognition a human person (i.e. the soul) can attain to, whereas Iamblichus (c.245–325) and Proclus are more pessimistic in this regard.

For this reason, these latter figures champion an approach to the divine through rituals as well, whereas in Plotinus and his student Porphyry (c.234–305) we find basically the intellectual way. Moreover, the notion of hierarchy per se is related to deep ontological problems that characterise pagan and Christian metaphysical systems, such as the Neoplatonic-Christian debate about necessity and freedom, or the issue of mediate versus immediate access to God. As was already said, I cannot venture to give or even hint to answers to all these issues,[16] but the reader will find relevant material in what comes.[17] Generally speaking, the first theoretical part of this chapter is essentially compatible with and could have been accepted by a late pagan Neoplatonist, too, even if not in its details. On the other hand, in the second part of the chapter important differences from Neoplatonism can be noted, particularly in the case of Christ's function in the hierarchy. This last point does not only complete, but actually surpasses and supersedes the pagan Neoplatonic view of hierarchy, as well as paves the way for the theological vision of Maximus the Confessor (c.580–662).[18]

One, two, three; where's the fourth?[19]: The theoretical model of hierarchy

Let me now turn to the chapter devoted to defining hierarchy from the first pages of *CH*.[20] From the three definitions, one in each sub-chapter, the first reads:

> On the one hand, hierarchy, according to me,[21] is a sacred order (τάξις ἱερὰ), as well as both understanding (ἐπιστήμη) and activity (ἐνέργεια), which is being assimilated (ἀφομοιουμένη) to the god-like, to the extent possible, and which is being elevated to the divine imitation in a way analogous (ἀναλόγως) to the illuminations that are given to it [sc. the hierarchy] from God.[22] On the other hand, the beauty befitting God (θεοπρεπὲς κάλλος), qua simple, qua god, qua principle of the rituals of initiation (ὡς τελεταρχικὸν) is pure of every possible kind of dissimilarity, but bestower (μεταδοτικὸν) of the proper (τοῦ οἰκείου) light according to the merit of each, and perfective (τελειωτικὸν) in a most divine rite of initiation (ἐν τελετῇ θειοτάτῃ) according to the steadfast formation (ἀπαράλλακτον μόρφωσιν) of the initiates towards itself [sc. the beauty], in a harmonious way.[23]

The long second period ("on the other hand," etc.) refers to God, not the hierarchy. However, it is essential to the definition, because the aspiration of the hierarchy is God. His role as final end is emphasised by the mention of "beauty."[24] From this perspective hierarchy is an alternative way of expressing "return," the last element of the aforementioned Neoplatonic and Christianised triad, now conceived by Dionysius as a response to God's providential "procession."[25] Hence Dionysius elsewhere writes:

> the elevation (ἀναγωγὴ) to God, as well as the return (ἐπιστροφὴ) and communion (κοινωνία) and union (ἕνωσις) [sc. with Him] takes place in order, as of course does the procession (πρόοδος) from God that is given in a way

> befitting goodness (ἀγαθοπρεπῶς) to all the hierarchies, and that abides in a communicative manner (κοινωνικῶς) with the most sacred harmony (μετ' εὐκοσμίας).[26]

Let us now return to the previous passage. It defines hierarchy in terms of a triad of predicates: order, understanding and activity.[27] First we need to explicate order (τάξις), about which Dionysius says:

> Order pertaining to hierarchy is the state in which some entities are being purified (καθαίρεσθαι), while some others purify (καθαίρειν); some entities are being illuminated (φωτίζεσθαι), while others illuminate (φωτίζειν); and some entities are sacredly perfected (τελεῖσθαι),[28] while other entities bring into sacred perfection (τελεσιουργεῖν).[29]

Thus, order means that hierarchy is an orderly, well-arranged and harmonious system. The parts of the system are its various classes.[30] Some of them bestow purification, illumination and perfection and others are the recipients of these gifts. In other words, a hierarchy presupposes two levels, defined by their proximity to a third, external principle, which is of course God Himself. The higher of the two levels is thus a "mediator," and providentially acts for the sake of the lower level or "recipient": taken together they constitute the hierarchy proper, while God as principle is the goal of hierarchy. Whatever takes place within the hierarchy must be explained with reference to this "principle" and its providence. With all this Dionysius does not venture far from the original meaning of "hierarch": he is a leader of others and is higher because he has the power to help these others.[31] God, the paradigm of Love, stands at the top; the hierarch or more generally the priestly order forms the mediator level, because it falls short of God's perfect love, but instantiates it by directly helping the immature recipient level rise to the principle in so far as possible.

This system merits the designation of "order" also because it is not a random group of things,[32] but a system whose harmony is constituted by the relations between its members. The orderly arrangement is due to the appropriate activity of the classes. Here is a parallel excerpt from the *EH* that makes this point:

> And the triadic division of every form of hierarchy we have, as I think, well presented in the hierarchies that have been already praised by us, having said, in accordance with our sacred tradition (παράδοσις), that every hierarchical system[33] is divided into the most sacred rites (ὁσιωτάτας τελετὰς), and [sc. into] the divinely-inspired knowers (ἐνθέους . . . ἐπιστήμονας) of them [sc. of the rites] as well as mystics (μύστας), and the ones who are sacredly being initiated by them [sc. by the mystics].[34]

So, hierarchy does involve ranks and levels as in the modern usage: each hierarchy consists of initiators and those who are initiated, to use Dionysius' language, since every step nearer to God is the experience of a yet more hidden mystery. But the

ranks are characterised not simply by superiority, but their roles in the process of return. Furthermore, different mediators can carry out the role of hierarch in different ways: we have seen that they may purify, illuminate or perfect the recipients of these three activities, so that we have three subclasses at both levels (giver and receiver of purification, of illumination and perfection). To be a member of a hierarchy is thus to be appropriately related to members of another level of the same hierarchy:

> (. . .) every hierarchical system is divided into sacred participation in[35] and bestowal of pure purification and divine light and sacredly perfecting understanding (τελεστικῆς ἐπιστήμης).[36]

All this explains why the triad in Dionysius' definition also includes activity (ἐνέργεια), and why the hierarchical relation can be expressed using verbs as well as nouns, in both voices, active and passive: ἱεραρχῶ and ἱεραρχοῦμαι. This is quite natural, since the role of a late antique hierarch was to carry out certain activities: the performance of rituals and spiritual teaching.[37]

The sort of activity described here is that of the superior for the inferior, and as just mentioned has three forms: purification, illumination and perfection. Thanks to this "downward" influence, the inferior is brought to engage in the "upward" return that we have also seen associated with hierarchy. The love that characterises the hierarchy as a whole is directed to God and is founded in a desire for godlikeness. To love God is to imitate God,[38] i.e. to act like God, who proceeds out of himself in generating the cosmos[39] and provides for it so that it returns back to the "paternal harbour."[40] This is the famous erotic cycle from *DN*, chapter 4,[41] whose ultimate though not unique exemplification is found in the person of Christ, who out of philanthropy descends into humankind, so that He brings the entire universe back into divine communion.[42] Thus stratification is not simply the manifestation of power as such, but requires an interest in ministering to those who are further away from God.[43] It is a causal relation that proceeds from the active entities (the level of the mediator) to the passive entities (the recipient), so that this whole dynamic system (the hierarchy) achieves in the best way it can its communion with God (the principle). Dionysius, as a faithful disciple of Paul,[44] characterises this communion even as co-*operation* with God.[45]

Here is a final passage on the importance of sharing and communicating God's gifts with those in need of them. It says that the followers of God, i.e. the members[46] of the hierarchy, are:

> capable of receiving (δεκτικὰ) the beam of the source of light (ἀρχιφώτου) and divinity (θεαρχικῆς) and are sacredly filled out (ἱερῶς ἀποπληρούμενα) by the bestowed radiance (ἐνδιδομένης αἴγλης), while shining it again forth (ἀναλάμποντα) to what comes after without envy (ἀφθόνως), according to the laws of the divine principle (θεαρχικοὺς θεσμούς).[47]

That the gift of the deity should not be selfishly kept for oneself is evident from the fact that it is a divine Law[48] that prompts the communion of gifts. The wording of

ἀφθόνως (without envy)[49] is of course reminiscent of the Demiurge from Plato's *Timaeus*,[50] who has been a paradigm for providence in both the pagan Neoplatonic[51] and the Christian traditions.[52] In this passage from Dionysius, providence institutes a "law," but this should not be conceived as something external that limits the freedom of the hierarchy. Rather it is the defining characteristic of its good order. Bringing together several passages[53] we can say that what is "θέσει"[54] (i.e. something that has been laid down) for the hierarchy is natural[55] for the Deity. Hierarchy as a dynamic system of relational entities is an image of God,[56] so that the local providence of each hierarchy embodies God's primary providence for every hierarchy. Such co-operation with God is not loss of one's freedom, but completion of it.

I will now end this section by commenting on the remaining predicate in the initial definition of hierarchy, namely understanding (ἐπιστήμη).[57] Who is it that is supposed to understand, and what is it that should be understood? We can turn here to a passage in which Dionysius enumerates the characteristics of the orders that receive the providential activity of their initiators.[58] The ones being purified should become totally pure from any internal conflict, and the ones illuminated should thereby become capable of being elevated to a state of contemplation:

> [W]hile the ones that are being perfected, being transposed from the imperfect state, [sc. should] become participants (μετόχους) of the perfecting understanding (τελειωτικῆς ἐπιστήμης) of the sacred realities envisaged (τῶν ἐποπτευθέντων ἱερῶν . . .).[59]

Conversely, the ones who bestow perfection are said to be "knowledgeable of the sacredly perfecting bestowal."[60] Understanding, then, characterises one who has been perfected in his initiation and has exhausted his capacities for communion with God. Does this mean that only the recipient, and not the mediator, needs to have understanding? No: the downwards activity that characterises the higher class presupposes understanding, which is indeed a precondition for carrying out the leading role in a hierarchical relationship. The hierarch has understanding and knows how to pass on this understanding, educating initiates so that they come closer to God. In the case of a human hierarchy, this understanding (for both the mediator and the recipients) involves a grasp of the hidden realities behind the various symbolisms and names of the Church and Scripture, which can elevate us to a more refined conception of the angelic realm and ultimately of God. In the case of the angelic hierarchy, by contrast, the understanding is directly about God, without the mediations of symbolism. In both cases, greater understanding of God enables a more efficient transmission of this sacred knowledge.[61]

The providential activity that takes place within hierarchy is however not only a matter of intellectual understanding. It also involves ritual,[62] something which is, again, consonant with the traditional figure of a hierarch. In fact, Dionysius makes clear that the mysteries of the Church that bring us into communion with God are instances of these providential activities,[63] and this is the "experiential" component of hierarchy. Which of these two aspects has greater importance for Dionysius? At first sight, one might say that he emphasises especially intellectual

understanding, which is unsurprising if we see him against the background of ancient Greek philosophy.[64] For instance, although various liturgical and scriptural texts suggest that there is a Heavenly Divine Liturgy,[65] rituals performed in the Heavenly realm by Christ the Hierarch and His angels, Dionysius does not exploit this idea in his writings, although when speaking of angels he does use language that might suggest the presence of rites.[66] Explicit discussion of rituals, qua instantiations of providential activities within hierarchy, is limited to the case of the human hierarchy. Moreover, as acknowledged by Rorem,[67] in the following passage from the *CH* the triple activity characteristic of hierarchy is set out in purely intellectual(ist) terms:

> And in a word, I would say also this not unreasonably, namely that partaking (μετάληψις) in the divine principle's understanding is also purification, as well as illumination and perfection: on the one hand like purifying from ignorance (ἀγνοίας) according to the knowledge of the more perfect initiations (τελεωτέρων μυήσεων), which is given in order, on the other hand illuminating with this very divine knowledge (γνώσει), through which it also purifies [sc. the knowledge] that did not behold before (οὐ πρότερον ἐποπτεύσασαν) the things that are now brought to light (ἐκφαίνεται) through the higher illumination, and perfecting (τελειοῦσα) again with this very light, i.e. with the habitual understanding (τῇ καθ' ἕξιν ἐπιστήμῃ) of the most bright initiations (τῶν φανοτάτων μυήσεων).[68]

But against such an intellectualist interpretation of the Areopagite, some readers favour a "liturgical" reading.[69] Without going into detail, I mention simply one central aspect of this reading: the observation that Dionysius' language is "doxological,"[70] i.e. on the one hand professing only "δόξα" or opinion[71] about God, and not firm certainty, but on the other glorifying God (cf. δόξα as gloria). Ultimately, this positive use of language is supplanted by the deeper understanding of Dionysius' apophatic teaching.[72] If logical and linguistic attempts to reach God ultimately fail, then we must seek other paths to come into communion with Him: hence the ritual component of Dionysius' theology.[73]

On this reading, even if Dionysius does not mention rituals with respect to angels, their greater understanding must lead them to the yet greater mysteries that lie beyond an intellectual grasp of God. We might say that Socratic ignorance is here put into a Christian (and hierarchical) context. What the angels should end up doing, is what we see and read Dionysius doing, though in a far loftier manner: doxology of God, as is done in the Divine Liturgy.[74] Perhaps this is also why Hierotheus, Dionysius' master and hierarch,[75] is famously described as follows in the *Divine Names*: "he did not only know the divine matters but had also experience of them."[76]

Five manifestations of hierarchy

So far, we have seen how the Dionysian notion of hierarchy is applied to the human realm of the church and the heavenly realm of the angels. In this section,

I will show that it is also applicable to God and especially Christ, as well as to Dionysius himself in his role as author.[77] I will begin with a recapitulating passage where Dionysius names every single class of the human hierarchy (note that the label "ecclesiastical" hierarchy is not mentioned here, and in fact features only in the title of the homonymous work).[78]

> So, we have concluded that on the one hand the sacred mysteries of initiation (ἁγίαι τελεταὶ) are purification and illumination and perfection, and on the other hand the deacons (λειτουργοὶ) form the purifying class, while the priest the illuminating [sc. class] and the god-like hierarchs the sacredly initiating one (τελεστικὴ); and purified class is that which does not participate in the sacred vision (ἱερᾶς ἐποψίας) and communion, because it is still being purified, the theoretical class (θεωρητικὴ δὲ τάξις) is the holy people (ὁ ἱερὸς λαός), and the initiated (τετελεσμένη) class that of the unified monks (ἑνιαίων μοναχῶν). For in such a way our hierarchy, adorned in a sacred way (ἱερῶς εὐθετουμένη) with the god-given orders (θεοπαραδότοις τάξεσιν), is of the same form (ὁμοειδής) to the heavenly hierarchies, preserving (ἀποσώζουσα) its characters that imitate and are of the form of the divine, as [sc. far as possible] in the level of humans (ὡς ἐν ἀνδράσιν).[79]

Here we have a detailed overview of the well-arranged system of the hierarchy on earth. It consists not only of the hierarchs proper at the top, but also priests and deacons (all of whom are initiators), and the recipients of initiation. The providence of the higher classes for the lower ones, so that the latter attain their best possible perfection, is again central to the passage. Another noteworthy element is that the human hierarchy ("our hierarchy" according to Dionysius' formulation)[80] is not only an image of the divine but tries also to imitate that desire for God one finds in the angelic hierarchies.[81] In what follows Dionysius will give a synopsis of these heavenly hierarchies (three triads with various names), and also illustrate the continuum between the angelic and human hierarchies. Using the verb ἱεραρχῶ, he indicates that hierarchy is a manifestation of divine providence, so that everyone participates in God:

> We should envisage (οἰητέον) that the supreme order (διακόσμησιν) [sc. the seraphim, cherubim and the thrones] (. . .) sacredly rules (ἱεραρχεῖν) the second one, and that the second one, which is composed (συμπληροῦται) of holy dominions and powers and authorities (τῶν ἁγίων κυριοτήτων καὶ δυνάμεων καὶ ἐξουσιῶν), leads (ἡγεῖσθαι) the hierarchy of principalities, archangels and angels (τῆς τῶν ἀρχῶν καὶ ἀρχαγγέλων καὶ ἀγγέλων ἱεραρχίας) (. . .) and that the revealing order (ἐκφαντορικὴν διακόσμησιν) of principalities and archangels and angels (. . .) presides over (ἐπιστατεῖν) (. . .) the human hierarchies,[82] so that the elevation to God, as well as the return and communion and union [sc. with Him] takes place in order (κατὰ τάξιν) (. . .).[83]

In this passage the order of cherubim, seraphim and thrones is supreme because it is the one nearest to God. As I illustrated before in the theoretical scheme of hierarchy, God is external to hierarchy, but still essential to its function and definition. I have also indicated that God is the final end of the hierarchy, as well as its efficient cause. This close bond between God and hierarchy is seen also in the manifold names that Dionysius ascribes to the Deity in the *Hierarchies*:[84] "Θεαρχία" (Divine Principle),[85] which resonates with the second part of the compound "ἱερ-αρχία."[86] The same holds for the other designations: "Τελεταρχία" (Principle of initiation),[87] related to the activity within hierarchy; "Ταξιαρχία" (Principle of order),[88] explicating the existence of order in hierarchy; "Ἐξουσιαρχία" (Principle of authority),[89] which is a more particular name in that it explains the characteristics of the heavenly hierarchy that includes the authorities.[90]

Using a Proclean vocabulary that Dionysius employs elsewhere,[91] we may say that God, our Father is a Hierarch in a causal manner (κατ' αἰτίαν), though not existentially (καθ' ὕπαρξιν). This is consistent with His position outside the hierarchical relationships discussed so far. But in contrast to the First Principle of the Neoplatonists, the God of St Paul and of St John the Theologian[92] is of course a Trinity and is also incarnated. Dionysius will exploit these two facts in order to extend hierarchy to include God, too, making Christ a καθ' ὕπαρξιν Hierarch,[93] who leads and brings creation back to the Father. The following passage is characteristic:

> [O]ur divine and prime sacred initiator (ὁ θεαρχικὸς ἡμῶν καὶ πρῶτος ἱεροτελεστὴς) (for Jesus, loving mankind at the utmost level [φιλανθρωπότατος], became also this for the sake of us) "did not glorify (ἐδόξασεν) Himself," as Scripture says, "but [sc. the one who glorified Jesus was] He who spoke to Him [sc. to Jesus]: 'You are priest for the centuries, following the order of Melchisedek'." For this reason, leading (ἄγων) the disciples to a priestly perfection (ἱερατικὴν τελείωσιν), although qua God He was Principle of the initiation (καίπερ ὑπάρχων ὡς θεὸς τελετάρχης), still in a hierarchical manner (ἱεραρχικῶς) He entrusted (ἀνατίθησιν) the principal initiating consecration (τὴν τελεταρχικὴν . . . τελεσιουργίαν) to His most Holy (παναγέστατον) Father and the principally Divine (τὸ θεαρχικὸν) Spirit.[94]

For this reason, Christ is called the end of every hierarchy, too.[95] For He is also the best exemplification of the abovementioned "co-operation" with God, because in Him the human and the Divine natures are in harmonious collaboration.[96]

I do not want to imply of course that Dionysius thinks there is any stratification in the Trinity, as there is in the heavenly and human hierarchies. Actually, the absence of stratification in the Trinity, along with the fact that hierarchy is an image of God, confirms that for Dionysius hierarchy is above all to do not with stratification, but with the providential facilitation of lower beings to return back to God, our Father, via certain activities. The dynamism of hierarchy can even exist independently of strata, within the economy of the divine Trinity itself. This application of hierarchy also brings home to us that the term is not to be

understood in the arrogant terms of one thing's exceeding another in power,[97] but rather in the humble terms of the image of Christ, who descends in order to initiate us in the mysteries of Divine Love.

The application of "hierarchy" not only to the human and heavenly spheres, but also to Divinity, suggests that there is one overall chain of hierarchies which at its top has the Archpriest[98] Christ, followed by various "classes."[99] This is why the names of each sphere can be extended to the others, too. Both hierarch and Christ are called "angel,"[100] while the angels are compared to hierarchs.[101] Thus, in Dionysius we have a stricter and looser use of "hierarch," referring on the one hand to the human official and on the other to any entity that carries out the functional role described above: a communication of knowledge that can be carried out by a higher "messenger," which is of course the original meaning of "angel,"[102] or even by Christ.

This brings us to the function of Dionysius' own *Hierarchies*, and his hierarchical role as their author. Dionysius is a presbyter, i.e. a priest, whose own hierarch is Hierotheus, even if he is also ultimately (and supposedly) a student of Paul.[103] Hence, Dionysius' task is the illumination of the initiated, and especially of his readers.[104] Historically the priests would assist hierarchs in the performance of rituals and in teaching. This is not to say that Dionysius' books are themselves rituals or mysteries, but the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy* is largely about the sacraments, and helps us to understand the sacred meaning of the mysteries. Meanwhile the *Celestial Hierarchy* informs us about the symbolisms of the angels in Scripture and in paintings. Both books teach about the structure of the hierarchies, in an attempt to illuminate us. In this sense their author is "doing hierarchy" (ἱεραρχεῖν), that is, trying to spark within us the light that will inflame our desire for God.[105]

Conclusion

If all this is right, then our modern sense of hierarchy has lost much of the original meaning invested in the term by Dionysius. For him, relating "hierarchically" is not merely or mostly to outrank someone, but to invite someone to move up to God. Just consider how Franz Kafka (1883–1924) suggests in works like *The Trial* that due to its innumerable layers, hierarchy distances us from any supreme authority that could guarantee justice. Dionysian hierarchy is the reverse: a result of Christ's loving providence, and a dynamic process for closing the gap between us and Him, as far as possible.

Notes

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1 See for instance O'Meara 1975.

2 Cf. Stiglmayr 1898: 181.

3 Cf. Wear and Dillon 2007: 7, 11, 56, n. 27.

4 Cf. Rorem's n. 11 in Luibheid and Rorem 1987: 197–198. The persona of the unknown author, Saint Dionysius the Areopagite, was a convert of Saint Paul after his famous sermon in Athens; cf. Acts 17:34.

5 Some *TLG* statistics: from the 112 instances of the word ἱεραρχία (in every declination and number) in the *CD*, only one is to be found in the *DN*. All the other instances stem from the *CH* (52 times) and the *EH* (59). The adjective ἱεραρχικός (in every form) has a total of 83 instances: *CH* 11; *EH* 67; *DN* 3; *Ep*. 8 2 times. The adverb ἱεραρχικῶς appears thrice in the *CH* and 16 times in the *EH*. The designation ἱεράρχης (in every form) appears 11 times in *CH*; *EH*-87; *DN*-2; thrice in *Ep*. 8 and also in the titles of the *Ep*. 7 and 9, although the titles are generally disputed as later insertions. Finally, the verb ἱεραρχῶ (in every form) is met 19 times in *CH* and 8 in *EH*. Note the absence of these terms from the *MT*.

6 These two books form a unity. The right order is to start reading the *CH* and conclude with the *EH*, since in the *CH* one finds an introduction to the notion of hierarchy per se. The contents of the books are mutually complementary. As to how they might contribute to Dionysius' overall project see different proposals by Luibheid and Rorem 1987: 140, n. 17, Golitzin 2013: xxxiv; Andreopoulos forthcoming (I thank the author for having sent me a draft). The Dionysian texts used are Suchla 1990 (for *DN*) and Heil and Ritter 2012 (for the Corpus' rest treatises). In my references I give the number of the chapter/section, the pagination/lineation (separated by a full-stop) of the standard critical edition, as well as the pagination from Migne's PG (along with the number of the volume, because they are used in English translations).

7 We should not overlook, however, the precedents in Christian (especially ascetic) literature; see Golitzin 2013: 50–56, 305–364, xxxiv – xxxv, n. 43, and Golitzin 1994: 233ff., especially 319–392.

8 See Dodds 1963, propositions 25–39.

9 See Vasilakis 2014: (chapters 2–3).

10 Cf. *ibid*.: 234–248. "Φιλανθρωπία" is frequently used in the *Hierarchies*; see e.g. Dionysius, *EH* III.8, Heil and Ritter 2012: 88.10; PG 3: 437a.

11 Cf. Plato, *Theaet*. 173a4–8.

12 Cf. idem, *Rep*. VII, 514a1–518b5.

13 Translations of Dionysius are my own. I have been assisted by the Modern-Greek translation of Dionysius by Sakalis 1985. Regarding the widely available English translation by Luibheid and Rorem 1987, Arthur 2008: xi notes that the "sheer readability and capacity for conveying the personality and emotions behind the words have made Dionysius much more accessible than he would have been otherwise." However, Perl is right in criticising Luibheid and Rorem 1987 as being more a paraphrase than a translation of Dionysius' complex Greek; see Perl 2007: ix. Cf. also Knepper 2014: xi.

14 Dionysius, *CH* IX.3, Heil and Ritter 2012: 38.16–20; PG 3: 261a. (My additions in square brackets.) About the Old Testament figure of Melchisedek see Gen 14:18–20; Hebr 7:1–28, *passim*.

15 About the Dionysian Hierarch see: *EH* I.3, Heil and Ritter 2012: 66.1–6; PG 3: 373c, *EH* II.3, Heil and Ritter 2012: 75.3–9; PG 3: 400b, and *EH* III.3, Heil and Ritter 2012: 83.3–10; PG 3: 429a–b.

16 I promise to do part of this in future papers. For Dionysius' relation to pagan Neoplatonism see also Pavlos' chapter in this volume on the notion of theurgy in the Areopagite, esp. its first part ("Methodological Concerns"), as well as the general methodological framework set out in the Introduction to this volume.

17 As a preliminary to pagan Neoplatonic, and especially Proclus' views on hierarchy I recommend Terezis 2002.

18 See also infra, n. 22.

19 Short paraphrase of the beginning of Plato, *Tim*. 17a1–2.

20 The reader will find in Dionysius' *Hierarchies* other definitions, which do not contradict each other, although sometimes have different formulations. See e.g. *EH* I.3, Heil and Ritter 2012: 65.22–24; PG 3: 373c and *CH* III.2, Heil and Ritter 2012: 18.10–13; PG 3: 165b.
21 Such a gesture, underlining the author's personal contribution to the tradition handed to him, is met also in Proclus; cf. e.g. Proclus, *In Alc*. 125.2 (Westerink).
22 For the Dionysian notion of ἀναλογία see Lossky 1930 and Loudovikos 2011: 125. It forms one of the bridges from Dionysius to Maximus the Confessor; contrast the approach in Gavin 2008 and Stang 2012: 114. For the absence of the term "hierarchy" and its cognates in Maximus (save for two unimportant occurrences) see Constas 2017: 8, n. 34.
23 Dionysius, *CH* III.1, Heil and Ritter 2012; 17.3–9; PG 3: 164d.
24 For a (par-)etymological connection between κάλλος (beauty) and issuing a call to (καλῶ) or charming someone (κηλῶ) see Proclus, *In Alc.* 328.11–13.
25 Cf. also Perczel 2015: 215.
26 Dionysius, *CH* IX.2, Heil and Ritter 2012: 37.10–13; PG 3: 260b. See also de Andia 1996 and Ivanovic 2017.
27 See the thorough analysis by Golitzin 2013: 161–191, in addition. One could draw an analogy with the Dionysian, as well as Neoplatonic, triadic division of divine intellects into being (corresponding to order), power (or capacity, corresponding to understanding) and activity; cf. *CH* XI.2, Heil and Ritter 2012: 42.1–2; PG 3: 284d.
28 Here, as in general, Dionysius' language is ambivalent between initiation (τελέω-ῶ/τελεῖσθαι/τελετή) and perfection (τελειόω-ῶ/τελειοῦσθαι/τελείωσις).
29 Dionysius, *CH* III.2, Heil and Ritter 2012: 18.17–19.2; PG 3: 165b–c.
30 In Greek these "classes" can be again termed as "τάξεις." In fact, in *CD* "τάξις" is interchangeable with "διακόσμησις" (arrangement). From the manifold cases, see: *CH* III.2, Heil and Ritter 2012: 18.11; PG 3: 165b; *CH* III.3, Heil and Ritter 2012: 19.21; PG 3: 168a; *CH* IX.2, *passim*., e.g. Heil and Ritter 2012: 36.12–14 and 24; PG 3: 257c and 260a; *CH* X.2, Heil and Ritter 2012: 40.16 and 18; PG 3: 273b.
31 Cf. also Louth 1989: 65, 66.
32 See also *CH* VII.2, Heil and Ritter 2012: 28.20–23; PG 3 208a–b.
33 "System" for πραγματεία. Cf. *LSJ* ad lem. III. (1.b).
34 Dionysius, *EH* V.1, Heil and Ritter 2012: 104.11–15; PG 3: 501a.
35 The existence of the following genitives leads us to take μετοχή as "participation", although in the *DN* μετοχή usually stands for Proclus' μετεχόμενον (i.e. the participated entity). Cf. Vasilakis 2014: 223, n. 63.
36 Dionysius, *CH* VII.2, Heil and Ritter 2012: 28.15–17; PG 3: 208a.
37 See the "ἱεραρχικαὶ τελεταί" (hierarchical initiation mysteries) in: *EH* III, Heil and Ritter 2012: 79.8; PG 3: 424c; cf. *ibid*.: 79.15; PG 3: 424d, and *ibid*.: 19; PG 3: 425a. In this chapter we find the following alternative formulations, too: "ἱεροτελεστικὴ πραγματεία" (sacredly initiating operation, with Luibheid and Rorem 1987 ad loc.) in *EH* III, Heil and Ritter 2012: 79.10; PG 3: 424c; "ἱεραρχικὰ σύμβολα" (hierarchical symbols) in *ibid*.: 79.13; PG 3: 424d; "τελειωτικὰ μυστήρια" (perfecting mysteries) in *ibid*.: 79.17; PG 3: 425a, and *EH* III.4, Heil and Ritter 2012: 83.12; PG 3: 429c; "τὰ ἱεραρχικά" (the hierarchical [sc. procedures, or for that matter every noun mentioned previously]) in *EH* III, Heil and Ritter 2012: 80.1; PG 3: 425a. Another alternative, the "ἱεραρχικαὶ (. . .) ἱερουργίαι" (hierarchical sacred workings) in e.g. *EH* III.12, Heil and Ritter 2012: 92.3–4; PG 3: 441c, reminds us of the pagan "theurgy" (θεουργία), suffused with Neoplatonic philosophy first by Iamblichus, for which see infra, n. 62. See also the variants of "ἱεραρχικὴ τελεσιουργία" (hierarchical initiating rite) in *EH* IV, Heil and Ritter 2012: 95.17; PG 3: 473a, and "τελειωτικὴ ἱερουργία" (perfecting sacred working) in *ibid*.: 95.19; PG 3: 473b.
38 Cf. "τὸ θεομίμητον" in e.g. *CH* III.1, Heil and Ritter 2012: 17.5; PG 3: 164d; *CH* III.2, Heil and Ritter 2012: 18.15; PG 3: 165b, and *CH* XIII.3, Heil and Ritter 2012: 45.20; PG 3: 301c.

39 In my terminology I consciously avoid entering into the debate of Neoplatonic emanation versus Christian creation. The main reason is that, although I have not found any evidence in support of emanationism in Dionysius, the author seems to consciously avoid entering into the aforementioned debate either. Instead he uses terminology such as "production" (παραγωγή); cf. e.g. *DN* II.11, Suchla 1990: 136.3; PG 3: 649b and *DN* I.5, Suchla 1990: 117.15; PG 3: 593d (adding here the noun "ὑπόστασις"/subsistence), as well as nn. 20 and 121 from Pavlos' chapter in this volume. On the Dionysian "procession" (πρόοδος) see Vasilakis 2014: 208, n. 19 and 219–220, nn. 50–52.

40 I am borrowing the expression "ὁ πατρικὸς ὅρμος" from Proclus; cf. his *Theologia Platonica*, vol. 1: 302.23–24, and vol. 4: 43.19; 64.24; 77.20 (Saffrey-Westerink), as well as Van den Berg 2000.

41 Dionysius uses erotic terminology in his *Hierarchies*, too. See the following examples from *EH* I.3, Heil and Ritter 2012: 66.14–15; PG 3: 376a ("πρὸς θεὸν . . . ἀγάπησις": upwards love); *EH* I.5, Heil and Ritter 2012: 67.19–20; PG 3: 376d ("ἐρῶντες τῆς τῶν μετ' αὐτοὺς ἀναγωγῆς": downwards love); *EH* II.2, Heil and Ritter 2012: 70.11; PG 3: 393b ("ἀγαπήσας": upwards); *EH* VIIa, Heil and Ritter 2012: 130.10; PG 3: 565c ("ἔρωτι θείῳ": upwards); *EH* V.6, Heil and Ritter 2012: 113.10–12; PG 3: 513b ("ἐραστὸς . . . ταῖς ὁμοταγέσι . . . τάξεσι . . . ἐρῶν τῶν ὁμοειδῶν νοῶν καὶ πρὸς αὐτῶν ἀντερώμενος . . . ἐπ' ἀλλήλοις ἐραστὴν εὐφροσύνην": a case of horizontal eros, between beings of the same stratum, although the structure of a single stratum is another story; "ἀντέρως," as loving response, is used by Plato in his erotic dialogue, *Phaedrus* 222e1. Cf. Vasilakis 2014: 115, n. 74). Regarding the connection between hierarchy and love (in both directions) see also Riggs 2009, Terezis and Panagopoulos 2009, as well as Perl 2013. I agree with almost every point of Perl's, except for his view (*ibid*.: 24) that the metaphysics of hierarchy is more fully presented in the *DN* than in *CH*/*EH*. *DN* forms the starting, as well as focal, point of Menelaou 2017, too.

42 Cf. Vasilakis 2014: 234–248. That Socrates in only a "medium" entity, whereas Christ is perfect God (and man) is the basic difference between the Dionysian hierarchy and the Socratic providential/educational love with which Proclus deals in the *Alcibiades' Commentary*. Cf. also Vasilakis 2017: 409–410, n. 13, while for the connection between Proclus and Dionysius in this respect see Pallis 2017: 288.

43 Cf. Drăgulin 1979. Since I do not read Romanian, what I know about this book I owe to Meyendorff 1980. It is to his credit that despite disliking Dionysius he wrote this sober review, and to the credit of Rorem that, although in Luibheid and Rorem 1987 there is almost no reference to any Orthodox scholar (or Byzantine Father), he included this valuable reference (*ibid*.: 198, n. 11; the reference in *ibid*.: 155, n. 47 to Louth 1981 must be from the time the latter was an Anglican priest).

44 Cf. *DN* III.2, Suchla 1990: 140.3–4; PG 3: 681a. Historical fiction is different to spiritual indebtedness.

45 "συνεργίαν": cf. *CH* III.3, Heil and Ritter 2012: 19.22; PG 3: 168a, and *CH* III.2, Heil and Ritter 2012: 18.16; PG 3: 165b ("Θεοῦ συνεργόν" γενέσθαι), as well as 1 Cor 3:9. Cooperating with God means being in harmony with God's creation, hence in *CH* I.3, Heil and Ritter 2012: 9.9; PG 3: 124a, Dionysius calls the human hierarchy "συλλειτουργόν" (colleague of the sacred ministry, according to Lampe 1961, ad lem.) of the celestial one.

46 "θιασῶται": cf. *CH* II.1, Heil and Ritter 2012: 9.16; PG 3: 136d; *CH* III.2, Heil and Ritter 2012: 18.2; PG 3: 165a. According to *LSJ* the principal meaning of θίασος in Classical Greek is that of a "*Bacchic revel*."

47 Dionysius, *CH* III.2, Heil and Ritter 2012: 18.3–6; PG 3: 165a.

48 Although Dionysius' Greek has "θεσμούς" here, the cognate "θέμις" of Plato, *Tim*. 30a6–7 seems relevant, especially in light of what comes in my text. Cf. also Dionysius' use of the cognate "θεμιτόν" in *CH* III.2, Heil and Ritter 2012: 18.5–7; PG 3: 165a.

49 Alternative translation, which does not betray the etymology, though: "superabundantly."
50 Cf. *Tim*. 29e1–3.
51 According to *TLG*, the adverb "ἀφθόνως," always in the above sense, comes up seven times in Proclus' works; see for instance, *El. theol*., prop. 122, l.11 (Dodds 1963); *Theol. Plat*. 6: 23.2; *In Alc*. 90.23.
52 See another instance in Dionysius: *EH* II.3, Heil and Ritter 2012: 75.4–7; PG 3: 400b.
53 See *CH* XIII.3, Heil and Ritter 2012: 46.1–5; PG 3: 301d, with the third definition of hierarchy in *CH* III.3, Heil and Ritter 2012: 19.21–20.2; PG 3: 168a–b.
54 Another cognate of the previous passage's "θεσμοί"; for the latter see also *EH* V.4, Heil and Ritter 2012: 106.24–25; PG 3: 504c and the relevant entry in the short Dionysian lexicon included in Terezis and Petridou 2017: 110.
55 Or supernatural, as Dionysius adds in *CH* III.3, Heil and Ritter 2012: 19.23–20.1; PG 3: 168a; cf. an analogous move in Proclus, *El. theol*., prop. 122, 9.
56 Cf. *CH* III.2, Heil and Ritter 2012: 18.11; PG 3: 165b, as well as Louth 1989: 67 and Ivanovic 2011: 40.
57 Its translation as "understanding" in order to denote a knowledge that is firmly grounded is justified by the fruitful scholarly debate about the use of the term in Plato and Aristotle. Cf. Burnyeat 2012.
58 See *CH* III.3, Heil and Ritter 2012: 19.9–14; PG 3: 165d.
59 Dionysius, *CH* III.3, Heil and Ritter 2012: 19.12–14; PG 3: 165d.
60 Dionysius, *CH* III.3, Heil and Ritter 2012: 19.19; PG 3: 168a; cf. also the continuation in *ibid*.: 20–21; PG 3: 168a: "τοὺς δὲ τελεσιουργοὺς ὡς ἐπιστημονικοὺς τῆς τελεστικῆς μεταδόσεως τελεῖν τοὺς τελουμένους τῇ πανιέρῳ μυήσει τῆς τῶν ἐποπτευθέντων ἱερῶν ἐπιστήμης."
61 Here we can draw a parallel to the Cappadocian idea that theoretical knowledge of God (which should be acquired by the recipient in the hierarchical case) corresponds to virtuous practical action (in the mediator). Cf. Kobusch 2017: 164.
62 I have already referred to "hierurgy" (ἱερουργία) supra, in n. 37. Regarding the Dionysian notion of theurgy see e.g. *EH* III.5, Heil and Ritter 2012: 84.18 and 21; PG 3: 432b and *EH* IV.12, Heil and Ritter 2012: 103.2–4, 16–18 and 21–22; PG 3: 484d–485b with Stock 2008: 152–170; concerning its differences from pagan Neoplatonic theurgy see Louth 1986: 432–435. See also Burns 2004 with further bibliography, as well as a fine insistence on the person and activity of Christ as a central difference between Proclus and Dionysius (*ibid*.: 127–128, 132), which is of course a central aspect of Pavlos' contribution on Dionysian theurgy to this volume.
63 Cf. *EH* V.3, Heil and Ritter 2012: 106.17–22; PG 3: 504b–c.
64 For proponents see e.g. Vanneste 1959 from Roman Catholic side and archimandrite Sophrony 2016: *passim*. from the Orthodox one. (I thank Dimitrios Pallis for discussing with me this point and suggesting bibliography here and elsewhere.) Proponents of the experiential side of the Areopagite are for instance Lossky 1968 and Yannaras 2005, who gives a Palamite interpretation of the Areopagite (i.e. befitting saint Gregory Palamas' theology, 1296–1359), and attributes the intellectualist reading to Western/scholastic figures, such as Thomas Aquinas (1225–1274).
65 See for instance Revelation 4:4 and 8; 5:6; Golitzin 2013: 16–17; (Metropolitan Kallistos) Ware 2011: 233, speaking "of the Divine Liturgy as 'heaven in earth'"; Bradshaw 2015: especially n. 28 with further bibliography.
66 See e.g. *CH* VII.1, Heil and Ritter 2012: 27.8–9; PG 3: 205b: "[T]he first of the heavenly hierarchies is sacredly performed by the most exalted substances" (ἡ πρώτη τῶν οὐρανίων ἱεραρχιῶν πρὸς τῶν ὑπερτάτων οὐσιῶν ἱερουργεῖται. In Dionysius' idiom the agent is usually denoted by the πρός + gen. construction, instead of the more common ὑπό + gen.). If something is sacredly performed, then this would be a mystery of the Church, a sacred activity and rite; compare the formulations in *EH* III, Heil and

Ritter 2012: 80.5–6; PG 3: 425b; *CH* VI.1, Heil and Ritter 2012: 26.1–2 and 5–6; PG 3: 200c. See also supra, nn. 37, 62, 63.

67 Cf. Luibheid and Rorem 1987: 165, n.79 and the longer n.75, *ibid*.: 163.

68 Dionysius, *CH* VII.3, Heil and Ritter 2012: 30.22–31.5; PG 3: 209c–d. The context relates to the first/highest celestial order.

69 See Andreopoulos forthcoming, which is on a par with the monastic reading of hieromonk (and now Archbishop Alexander) Golitzin 1994, one of Areopagite's most profound interpreters. See Newheiser 2010 for some critique, as well as the more recent contribution of Golitzin 2013: *passim*, e.g. 16, 17, 25, 28, 40, 44, 50.

70 Cf. Andreopoulos forthcoming: (4, 6); cf. also Pallis 2017: 297.

71 Cf. the Platonic use in *Rep*. VI, 511d4 and 501a9 (τὸ δοξαστόν).

72 Cf. Andreopoulos forthcoming: (5).

73 Cf. Louth 1986: 438, speaking though only in the context of *EH*, and Ivanovic 2011: 42. Within this line of interpretation it has also been proposed that "Sacramental Theology" would be a better translation for the title of the work. Cf. Andreopoulos forthcoming: (3). Rorem 2015 has a totally different reading. For criticism of the latter see Golitzin 2013: xxxii, xxxvi, 34–36. For a history of the development of Christian Orthodox worship, mainly liturgical, see Rentel 2006.

74 In this way an understanding of intellectualist brand is subsumed in the ritual, i.e. liturgical, component mentioned above. For such a rich understanding of "understanding", see also infra, n. 77. Let us not forget that Christ is not only the Truth ("ἀλήθεια" according to John 14:6), but also Love made flesh (cf. 1 John 4:8–9; cf. also in the list of *DN* I.6, Suchla 1990: 118.11–119.1; PG 3: 596a–b). He is not a mere intellectual object of knowledge, but a Lover, who issues an erotic call to His beloved cosmos, becoming himself the Beloved (cf. 1 John 4:19). In this sense, one gets to know another person deeply, only when he/she genuinely loves her/him. It is in this much richer erotic framework that John speaks of knowledge, and I suggest that the same we should do for Dionysius, too (whether the noun in question is "γνῶσις" or "ἐπιστήμη"). After all, Dionysius examines the divine name of Eros (Love) in chapter 4 of *DN*, while he gets to "intellectual" names later, in chapter 7.

75 Cf. *DN* III.2, Suchla 1990: 139.17–18 and 140.3–4; PG 3: 681a.

76 Dionysius, *DN* II.9, Suchla 1990: 134.1–2; PG 3: 648b: ". . . οὐ μόνον μαθὼν ἀλλὰ καὶ παθὼν τὰ θεῖα . . . ". See also de Andia 2006. Golitzin 2013: 34, interprets the formula as "'suffering' the mystery of the Incarnation"; cf. also *ibid*.: 40 (on Moses). In any case, I take this formula as an apt manifestation of Dionysian "understanding."

77 There could be three more candidates here, but I will not discuss them: the "Legal" hierarchy, i.e. the hierarchy we find in the Old Testament which in linear (non-vertical) terms of time antedates the ecclesial hierarchy that was inaugurated with Christ's incarnation. See e.g. *EH* V.1, Heil and Ritter 2012: 105.3–106.3; PG 3: 501b–504a; the internal hierarchy of soul from *Ep*. 8, 3–4, Heil and Ritter 2012: 182.3–184.2 (cf. *CH* X.3, Heil and Ritter 2012: 40.23–41.4; PG 3: 273c), reminiscent of the Platonic *Republic*'s analogy between city and soul (compare however Golitzin 2013: 17–18, 21–24); finally, the ontological chain from soulless beings up to humans and angels, which we could call "cosmic hierarchy," though Dionysius himself does not apply the word in this way. See *CH* IV.1, Heil and Ritter 2012: 20.11–19; PG 3: 177c–d, and cf. for confirmation Biriukov 2015: 83–84.

78 Cf. Ivanovic 2011: 29, and Luibheid and Rorem 1987: 195, n. 2.

79 Dionysius, *EH* VI.5, Heil and Ritter 2012: 119.8–15; PG 3: 536d–537a.

80 "ἡ καθ' ἡμᾶς ἱεραρχία": cf. also *EH* I.1, Heil and Ritter 2012: 63.3; PG 3: 369a. For Golitzin 2013: 25 this is the "church at worship," i.e. liturgy; cf. also Golitzin 2003: 186.

81 Cf. e.g. *CH* VIII.2, Heil and Ritter 2012: 35.21–25; PG 3: 241c.

82 An exceptional case where a plural is used for the human hierarchy, too. Cf. also Luibheid and Rorem 1987: 171, n. 100.

83 Dionysius, *CH* IX.2, Heil and Ritter 2012: 37.3–11; PG 3: 260a–b.
84 Dionysius was so fond of inventing names, starting with his own, that he did not take rest by interpreting biblical names of God in the *DN*, but went on to this project in his *Hierarchies*.
85 This ascription, which is Dionysius' coinage, too (cf. Louth 1986: 437), is frequently used in *CD*; see e.g. *EH* I.5, Heil and Ritter 2012: 67.17; PG 3: 376d.
86 See a word-play in *CH* VII.2, Heil and Ritter 2012: 29.19; PG 3: 208d. Dionysius liked linguistic jokes, too; in *CH* II.2, Heil and Ritter 2012: 11.4; PG 3: 137d, the mention of the noun in the formula "ὀρνιθεία ἀγελαρχία" (principal flock of birds) has in it grammatical, structural and sound similarities with "ἱεραρχία."
87 See *CH* VII.2, Heil and Ritter 2012: 29.24; PG 3: 209a.
88 See *CH* IV.3, Heil and Ritter 2012: 22.19; PG 3: 181a. Only in *CH* XI.2, Heil and Ritter 2012: 42.7–8; PG 3: 285a, does it not refer to God, but to the hierarchy in question, especially its order.
89 See *CH* VIII.1, Heil and Ritter 2012: 33.22; PG 3: 240b.
90 In the same manner, due to being source of the characteristics of the angelic group named "Dominions" (κυριότητες), Deity is called "κυριαρχία" (Principle of dominion) in *CH* VIII.1, Heil and Ritter 2012: 33.4; PG 3: 237c.
91 See *Ep.* 9, 2, Heil and Ritter 2012: 200.5–8; PG 3: 1108d, Dodds 1963: prop. 65 and Vasilakis 2014: 210–212.
92 For the significance that Dionysius attaches to St John "the Divine," addressee of the last (10th) *Epistle* of *CD*, see Golitzin 2013: 1–6. See a complementary perspective in Vasilakis 2014: 247, n. 135 and Vasilakis 2017: 410, n. 13.
93 Hebrews 4:14/5:5 calls Him "Archpriest" (ἀρχιερεύς); see also infra, n. 99. The Dionysian passage to be cited has direct references to this Pauline text. Like with Dionysius I avoid calling its author pseudo-Paul; for this Epistle's authorship see Criswell 2013.
94 Dionysius, *EH* V.5, Heil and Ritter 2012: 112.8–15; PG 3: 512c–d. Cf. Hebrews 5:5–6 (my translation of the biblical excerpts).
95 Cf. *EH* V.5, Heil and Ritter 2012: 107.16–17; PG 3: 505b. He is its principle, as already noted; cf. *EH* I.1, Heil and Ritter 2012: 63.12–64.1; PG 3: 372a, and the full form in *EH* I.2, Heil and Ritter 2012: 65.20–21; PG 3: 373b.
96 This could be an orthodox way towards understanding the supposedly infamous "θεανδρικὴ ἐνέργεια" (God-man activity) of *Ep.* 4, Heil and Ritter 2012: 161.9; PG 3: 1072c. See also the remarks by Golitzin 2013: 43–44.
97 Tsagdis unpublished makes many interesting connections with contemporary continental philosophy. Compare Dionysius' reception by Aquinas in Hankey 1997 and Hankey forthcoming, with the bibliography in n. 1.
98 There might be a word-play here between the terms hierarch and archpriest, since both are composite of words with identical root (ἱερός/ἱερεύς and ἄρχων/ἀρχή), but each time in the inverse order of composition.
99 So, also the hierarch functions as a specific image of Christ (cf. e.g. *EH* II.2, Heil and Ritter 2012: 70.2–3; PG 3: 393a) and both the angels and the theologians or hierarchs can be already called "gods" (cf. *CH* XII.3, 43.12–19; PG 3: 293b).
100 With regard to the hierarch see *CH* XII.1, Heil and Ritter 2012: 42.15; PG 3: 292c; cf. *EH* VII.7, Heil and Ritter 2012: 127.16–18; PG 3: 561c, Mal 2:7, Rv e.g. 2:1 and 8. Regarding Christ see *CH* IV.4, Heil and Ritter 2012: 24.1–4; PG 3: 181d. Cf. Isa 9:6.
101 See various examples in *CH* VIII.2, Heil and Ritter 2012: 34.25–35.3; PG 3: 241a; *CH* XIII.3, Heil and Ritter 2012: 46.19–21; PG 3: 304b; *CH* XIII.4, Heil and Ritter 2012: 48.22–49.2; PG 3: 305c–d and *ibid*.: 49.8–10; PG 3: 308a.
102 For a philosophical approach to "angeletics," as has been termed, see Capurro and Holgate 2011, with a nice piece on Plotinus by Stamatellos 2011.
103 Perczel 2015: 218–219 notes that inserting between Paul and Dionysius the medium of another master, i.e. Hierotheus, is an "anomaly." Here we may consider

that in the first sacrament to be described in *EH* chapter 2, Baptism (or "divine birth" – "θεία γέννησις," according to Dionysius' terminology; cf. e.g. *EH* II.1, Heil and Ritter 2012: 69.7; PG 3: 392b, and Luibheid and Rorem 1987: 201, n. 21) we find this triple scheme again (especially *ibid*.: chapters 2.II and III). The convert to be baptised has an "ἀνάδοχος" (sponsor), who, as another mediator, leads him, so to speak, to the Hierarch, symbolising the Church. This setting is an image of the hierarchy, when the person baptised is already a member, albeit the "lowest" one, of the Church. Yet again, the hierarch and generally the priestly order lead the way to God.

104 Cf. also *CH* XV.1, Heil and Ritter 2012: 50.13–51.1; PG 3: 328a, with Luibheid and Rorem 1987: 182, n. 126; 176, n. 116.

105 Thus, "φιλόθεον" (used only as adjective, not as noun, in the seven times it appears in *CD*: cf. e.g. the ascription to Melchisedek in *CH* IX.3, Heil and Ritter 2012: 38.15 and 17; PG 3: 261a, mentioned supra) becomes the answer to God's "φιλανθρωπία." Note also that the supposed recipient of the main treatises of the Corpus (*DN*/*MT*/*CH*/*EH*) is a priest called Timothy (Τιμόθεος: the one who honours God, and therefore loves Him), like the recipient of two of Paul's Epistles (whose name has a resemblance with one of the main, even if absent, characters of the *Symposium*, Diotima: Διοτίμα, i.e. the honour of Zeus).

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11 The doctrine of immanent realism in Maximus the Confessor*

Sebastian Mateiescu

Immanent realism is a theory about universals which states that the universal is what is common to individuals and that it exists as an indivisible whole in each of them, with no anterior existence to those partaking in it. According to this interpretation of the universal, human nature for instance, is multiplied without division into every human person, but humanity itself has no temporal anteriority to the individuals in which it gets instantiated.[1] Recent scholarship has convincingly demonstrated that there were important developments of this theory in early and late Christian thought.[2] Maximus the Confessor (c.580–662), a subtle and philosophically minded theologian of the seventh century who defended orthodoxy at the cost of his own life, is one such famous contributor to this idea of immanent realism.[3] However, by focusing on Maximus' argument for the universals' ontological dependence on individuals, these accounts of Maximus' theory have mostly drawn on the idea of the immanence of the universal and left unexplained Maximus' rationale for its reality.[4] And when such an explanation has been ventured, the arguments given have often relied on Maximus' repetitive formal statements for the unity of the universal and not on his positive accounts of the reality of the universal.

The aim of this chapter is to bridge this gap and arrive at a comprehensive description of the pillars of Maximus' theory of immanent realism. The argument will show that Maximus employs two principles, one dealing with logic and the other with metaphysics, and that Maximus' originality consists in this unique combination. The former principle concerns the use of "differentia" (διαφορά), a traditional term of ancient logic, as a means to define the human nature of Christ. The latter principle offers a metaphysical interpretation for differentia as the motion and power of being. The argument will hold that the Confessor's strategy was to assign to differentia an intermediate yet binding status of genus and species, and that inspired by the work of Dionysius the Areopagite he proposed a metaphysical and Platonic interpretation that ingeniously correlated differentia with ontology. In Maximus' hands, this Platonic idea was to receive a firm Christian articulation in line with the doctrine of the creation of the world, but which nevertheless led Maximus to innovate within the traditional logic of the genus-species-individuals relationship. More precisely, this allowed the Confessor to introduce a fundamental distinction between the

ontological relevance of the particular (hypostasis) and that of the genus. And it was from the idea of existence as deriving from the genus that Maximus was able to prove the full reality and distinction of the human nature of Christ. Pressed by the anti-Chalcedonian argument that since every nature must have a hypostasis in order to exist, and hence two natures after incarnation would ask for two Christs to exist, Maximus finds the solution to this *miaphysite* (μία φύσις: one-nature) argument for the existence of one composed nature in Christ in a new philosophical interpretation of nature as a universal entity whose existence can be derived from the genus. Maximus' novelty at this point is to interpret differentia as an adequate alternative to nature itself. By treating differentia, traditionally a concept in logic, as a universal substitute for nature that is metaphysically based in the genus, Maximus will be able to grant existence to nature outside the scheme of species-individuals relationship. Thus, by completing his pro-Chalcedonian theory for the existence of Christ *in* two natures, divine, and human, Maximus fulfilled his argument for immanent realism in a manner that has passed unnoticed in recent scholarship.

The argument will proceed as follows: the ancient philosophical stance towards immanent realism will be firstly introduced, and its Christian development under the Cappadocians will then be summarised. It will be shown how the anti-Chalcedonian authors were later to merge this into an antirealist theory of the universal, as exemplified by the Neoplatonic and Christian thinker John Philoponus (c.490–570). Maximus' theory will be situated within the continuity of this debate and the Confessor's argument will be presented in its two steps, concerning the logic of differentia and its metaphysics. The Platonic background of Maximus' metaphysics will subsequently be analysed and the conclusion will uncover its central role in Maximus' new logic of predication.

The ancient philosophical account of universals

From a modern perspective, a realist is someone committed to the belief that the world and its constituents exist independently of the human mind. The ancient realist perspective, however, concerned a broader set of aspects related to the world and the nature of its elements. For example, if one were to observe the world through the eyes of the ancients, one would find it difficult to explain the integrity of beings that continuously undergo temporal change and physical transformation. It was this explanatory aim that led Plato to argue for the existence of a world of Ideas that would secure the identity of beings through participation in the Ideas and thus make universal knowledge about the world possible. One key claim of this realist view is that the Ideas have an ontological independence from sensible objects; the Ideas preexist the objects and are not affected by any changes occurring in them.[5] The traditional historical account is that Aristotle criticised his master precisely for this separation of the Ideas and then constructed a theory that argued for the Ideas' existence in sensible things. However, not all historians of philosophy have accepted this explanation as complete, as some of Aristotle's critiques of Plato in the *Metaphysics* do not concern the Ideas themselves but mostly

the problematic relationship between genus and species. In particular, these arguments call into question the idea that the genus is something beyond the species, a view that Aristotle set out to reject.[6] While Aristotle does talk about secondary substances such as species and genera as being universal entities that exist in sensible particular beings, it is nevertheless not easy to understand what Aristotle's exact interpretation of their mode of existence was. The first philosopher to notice this in a clear way was Porphyry of Tyre (c.234–c.305), a pupil of the Neoplatonic philosopher Plotinus (204/5–270), who observed that genera and species were given an unclear ontological status in Aristotle:

> [it is uncertain] whether they subsist, whether they actually depend on bare thoughts alone, whether, if they actually subsist, they are bodies or incorporeal and whether they are separable or are in perceptible items and subsist about them.[7]

This text, which has become famous for providing the theoretical basis for the late Medieval debate on universals, has the advantage of making transparent a historically important shift that took place in the philosophical debate over universals. For Porphyry, the universals were no longer restricted to Plato's Ideas but were now viewed as materialised and equally shared in common by the members of genera and species. The shift thus incorporated a crucial terminological change as it turned from being a discourse on separate universals to a discussion about the commonality of the species and genera with the individuals in which they exist.[8] It was this problematic mode of existence of the common (τὸ κοινόν) in relationship with the individual (τὸ ἄτομον) that Porphyry highlighted as being left unresolved in Aristotle and all subsequent generations of Neoplatonic commentators tried to find the right balance between Plato and Aristotle on this issue. The general picture of universals that the Neoplatonists later conveyed is a threefold one, nicely illustrated by the Neoplatonic philosopher Ammonius Hermeias (c.435/445–517/526) with the example of a ring depicting Achilles' portrait and its imprints on several pieces of wax. According to Ammonius, the seal of the ring represents the universal *before the many* (πρὸ τῶν πολλῶν) individuals, the mark on the several pieces of wax represents the universal *in the many* (ἐν τοῖς πολλοῖς) individuals, and the common features of these imprints which one can retain in mind after viewing them represents the universal *after* or *posterior to the many* (ἐπὶ τοῖς πολλοῖς) individuals.[9] We can recognise the Platonic approach to universals in the idea of the universal before the many, and on strong grounds we could readily associate the perception of the universal after the many with what is known as Aristotle's conceptualism.[10] However, it is more controversial to assign a clear-cut historical representative for the universal *in* the many. Current scholarship has placed Maximus the Confessor in continuity with a Patristic view, commencing with the Cappadocians that commits itself explicitly to such a theory of immanent realism about universals.[11] It becomes straightforward to perceive the conformity of this theory with other major Christian assumptions if one simply observes its similarity to the Trinitarian model. This last view preaches the oneness and full

commonality of the divine essence with every divine person and forbids any division of the common item from the persons that partake in it. As we will see, however, this was not always the favoured example of Christian authors in deducing immanent realism, but rather the opposite step was often taken. Many times they reasoned on a merely natural basis and then extrapolated the argument to the case of the Trinity. This has the implicit virtue of making their arguments available to a non-Christian audience as well. Of course, Christian assumptions were always in play since those arguments were all meant to serve doctrinal ends and were not developed as pure philosophical discourses. However, by touching the philosophical side of the problem, they have now become susceptible to philosophical attention as well.

The Cappadocians on immanent realism[12]

In *Epistle 38*, a work that nowadays is ascribed to Gregory of Nyssa (c.335–395),[13] we come across one of the first notable Cappadocian attempts to arrive at an interpretation of the universal. Its essence consists in establishing the true and actual commonality for individuals of the same species on the basis of their sharing in the same "formula of being (λόγος τῆς οὐσίας)."[14] The argument implies that despite the difficulty in defining human nature, the commonality of all human beings might be established through a comparison of several equivalent delineations of being. However, if taken literally, the end of that process would be a perfect synonymy between these formulas or descriptions, without implying by necessity that the nature itself is common. And if Gregory decided to go a step further and teach the perfect ontological commonality of those human beings, one must presume that he did so because the formula of being was not just a nominal description to him but also bore a strong ontological import. This can be better observed in the use of the term by his brother Basil of Caesarea (c.329–379), who is more explicit in linking the formula with participation in "being" (εἶναι): "I shall state that *ousia* has the same relation to hypostasis as the common item has to the particular. For each of us partakes (μετέχει) of being (εἶναι) through the common formula of being (λόγος τῆς οὐσίας)."[15] This is an explicit reference to the philosophical problem of the common and the individual which, oddly enough, Basil prefers to resolve by way of another problematic term, i.e. participation. According to Basil, the same formula of being would amount to participation in the same being and hence the sharing of the same being in common by its participants would be in this way assured. This comes as a surprising move given that the Cappadocians were most likely aware of the philosophical controversies over participation.[16] Porphyry, for example, who may have been the source for Basil's philosophical references in the above statement, had previously contemplated the idea that the individuals can divide the species in which they partake.[17] Leaving aside the question of Porphyry's exact view on this, it is clear that the Cappadocians indeed realised that building commonality on participation might be subjected to criticism. This is why we find Gregory of Nyssa insisting on the

oneness and wholeness of *ousia*, which according to him must exist undivided in individuals:

> But the nature is one, unified to itself and a precisely undivided monad, not increased nor decreased through subtraction, but in what it is it is one and remains one even though it appears in a multitude. It is indivisible, continuous, and complete and not divided by the individuals that participate in it.[18]

This represents an unambiguous affirmation of the immanence of the universal in the individuals. The nature of humanity is portrayed as a single entity that becomes repeatedly instantiated in each of its individuals without division. However, when it comes to explaining why that is the case, and why, on the contrary, it is not the case (as Porphyry elsewhere suggests)[19] that commonality is a concept existing in the mind, Gregory does not rely on a positive argument. Rather than giving direct evidence for the reality of human nature, he urges us to refine our deceitful language in which nature appears to be divisible in itself. According to him, language commonly allows the use of expressions such as "three men," as if humanity had split itself into three in its extension into individuals, but this is for Gregory an imprecise (*catachrestic*) use of language.[20] Instead of this colloquial manner of counting natures, Gregory suggests that it is more correct to speak of the one and same nature of several human beings. In this way we would avoid confusion between the circumscription (περιγραφὴν) of the nature in individuals and its presumed divisibility into those individuals, as for Gregory enumeration is first and foremost made possible by the circumscription of nature (through shape, place, colour etc.) and not by its existence.[21] Gregory's major assumption, left unexplained here, is that the individual circumscription of a nature is not just the product of a mere logical procedure of division. According to the Aristotelian traditional logic synthetised by Porphyry, the individual is obtainable at the end of successive conceptual divisions starting from the most generic genus as representative for the widest class-concept and ending at the most specific species, with the species being further individualised through the addition of some particular properties to it.[22] Becoming available in this context as a natural consequence of division, the particular's marks of actual existence, or as Gregory puts it, the individual's circumscription, behave as if they were non-detachable and simply identical to individuality itself. Indeed, the association between individuality, number, and existence had circulated as an accepted thesis in the philosophical circles.[23] That idea mainly relied on the individuals' double yet unique status of being ontologically independent and being no further divisible. Seen in the light of this, Gregory's idea of circumscription appears like an under-developed argument against the intrinsic correlation between the logic of division and existence. In other words, Gregory invites us to reason here as if the individualisation of a nature is not the effect of the successive division of the genera into species and then into individuals. However, with Maximus the Confessor we find a developed theory of immanent realism, which explicitly attacks the assumption of the divisibility of nature in individuals. This was prompted for

Maximus by the anti-Chalcedonian authors, who drew precisely on this "divisibility argument." Unsurprisingly, the Cappadocians, Basil, and Gregory, were invoked in support of that argument by the anti-Chalcedonians.[24] Unquestionably, this was also favoured by the Cappadocians' lack of positive arguments for the reality of the common nature, which were substituted with arguments for the non-divisibility of nature. As we will now see, the Christological debates that took place in the aftermath of Chalcedon called for a fully fledged development of the positive arguments for the realism of the common nature, rather than a mere assessment of its indivisibility.

The anti-Chalcedonian alternative to immanent realism

The major features of the Cappadocian theory concerning the immanent realism of universals can be summarised as follows:

i The universal is a real, whole, and indivisible unity which constitutes the individuals.
ii The universal's mode of existence is that of being fully and simultaneously present in each of its instantiations.
iii The individuals represent the universal plus some particular properties added to it.
iv The individuals have ontological priority to the universals, in the sense that the latter depend for their actual existence on the former. There are no universals outside the individuals.[25]

It was the last of these arguments that proved the hardest to accommodate with the post-Cappadocian theological constraints that emerged from the renowned Council of Chalcedon (451). The Council emphatically stated that Jesus had two natures and existed *in* two natures (*ἐν* δύο φύσεσιν, *in duabus naturis*), the divine and the human. However, the statement *in duabus naturis* caused the anger of several Christian communities of that time onwards.[26] In his classical work *La Christologie du monophysisme Syrien*,[27] Joseph Lebon identifies the generally professed synonymy between *physis*, *hypostasis* and *prosōpon* as the common bond of these anti-Chalcedonian reactions at the top of each lies the idea that only the individual has a concrete existence. The upshot of this is that there is no nature without a *hypostasis*, or, as the Scythian monk Johannes Maxentius was to phrase it succinctly in 520: *non est natura sine persona*.[28] In addition, as the argument continues, if there is no nature without instantiation, then Christ's two natures after the incarnation must correspondingly exist in two individuals. The detractors of Chalcedon concluded that in the face of this necessary yet undesirable conclusion, it was imperative to take a stand against the Council and infer that after the union there could be no way to talk about the existence of Christ *in* two natures. Furthermore, they argued against using the number "two" when referring to Christ's natures and concluded that there must be only one composed nature (*mia physis/hypostasis*) of Christ after the incarnation.[29]

How should these penetrating anti-Chalcedonian arguments be interpreted in the light of previous observations? The anti-Chalcedonians seem to have based the very condition for the reality of Christ's human nature on nothing but the general rule stating the immanence of the common nature in individuals. In order for the natures of Christ to exist, the anti-Chalcedonians insist that the natures should firstly possess individual existence and hence be countable. Even if not stated explicitly, this idea recalls the aforementioned common philosophical superimposition of individuality upon existence but now understood in the opposite order: enumeration, and hence the individuality that stands at its basis, depends on having actual existence, for, arguably, existence means individual existence. Therefore, the reality of Christ's human nature becomes dependent here on its having a corresponding instantiated existence. A sophisticated and informative approach to this idea was pursued by the Neoplatonic and Christian writer John Philoponus (c.490–570). I have shown elsewhere how strongly Philoponus' theory was influenced by his philosophical background.[30] Here I will recount only those ideas that are responsible for Philoponus' close association of the nature's individuality with the reality of the universal. If Philoponus is known among theologians as the advocate of *Tritheism*,[31] he was nonetheless a nuanced supporter of conceptualism with regard to universals, which he introduced into his theological arguments without hesitation:[32]

> Hence the same common nature (κοινὴ φύσις), such as that of man, by which no man is distinguished from another, when it exists in each individual (ἐν ἑκάστῳ τῶν ἀτόμων γινομένη), is then proper (ἰδία) to this one and not common to anyone else (. . .). For the rational and mortal living being in me is not common to anyone else (Τὸ γὰρ ἐμοὶ ζῷον λογικὸν θνητὸν οὐδενὶ τῶν ἄλλων ἀνθρώπων).[33]

Philoponus goes on to explain that although the common nature has a general unified meaning, it nevertheless becomes particularised in its existence. One reason that he gives in favour of this interpretation has to do with the traditional manner of talking about universals as predicates of a multitude: "But – Philoponus conveys – the rational in the individual [i.e. differentia in the individual] is predicated of that individual alone, and thus it would not be a [universal/general] differentia."[34] In a previous passage, in which he drew on the things that exist, Philoponus had clearly endorsed his conceptualist view of the universals: "Rather, only what is after the many and conceptual is customarily predicated of the individuals, because we customarily predicate the concepts we have of things."[35] He also has a more comprehensive explanation for the particularisation of the nature that leads him to eschew an immanent realism. As anticipated earlier, this explanation concerns the obtaining of the individual through the logic of the division of genus and species. As requested by Aristotle and explicitly endorsed by Philoponus himself, a univocal predication demands that the genus be divided into equal classes by the differentia such that the members of those classes will not be assigned opposed definitional properties. For example, in this logic "man" is either "rational" or "irrational" for

otherwise the definition of its essence would consist of incompatible properties.[36] However, Simplicius of Cilicia (c.490–560), one of Philoponus' notable Neoplatonic contemporaries, has well called into question the presupposed correspondence between this logic of division and ontology itself and has suggested that if seen ontologically, the process of division breaks way with full substantial commonality: "The commonality which completes the individuals has difference together with the common item. For there is nothing merely common in mortal and immortal substance, but the common feature is differentiated and the difference is shared in common."[37] In other words, strong ontological commonality evaporates in the face of differentiation and eventually this idea is shared by Philoponus when he argues that from an ontological point of view the top-down differentiation process must end in particular natures (*merikai ousiai*).[38]

The implications of this view for the interpretation of the nature's commonality are straightforward: for Philoponus the differentiated nature of man could not remain one and exist as a whole in each human person and hence is not common to all human individuals. As seen above, the Neoplatonic philosopher explains this by suggesting that the differentia itself becomes individualised, such that when, for example, rationality is in the many it cannot be called a differentia anymore. In line with the logic of differentiation described above, the nature itself must become particularised if the differentia itself undergoes particularisation. But since this only happens at the time of the *production* of the individual, this amounts to saying that the differentia itself contributes to the very production of that individual.[39] Hence, if for Gregory of Nyssa the circumscription of nature (through shape, place, colour etc.) is a condition for its individuality, to Philoponus that is a condition for mere existence but not for individual existence. The reason why is not difficult to observe, for one might easily imagine the individual having had a different shape or colour, and in general a different material substratum or circumscription, without thereby ceasing to be what it is. On the other hand, being what it is must be due to the nature or specific essence of that individual and not owing to the material circumstances in which it appears to exist. However, it seems that in Philoponus' view to exist is to be a particular nature such that existence is synonymous with or in any case indistinguishable from individuality. Individuality and divisibility have now become strictly correlated: the former is now obtainable as divided commonality and this seems to be altogether the reason why individual existence excludes any commonality. Pursuing this argument in further detail, Philoponus can only conclude that the true commonality is but a concept existing in our mind that we customarily predicate of the individuals.[40] However, the implications of this view for Christology are straightforward: the differentia between the two natures, the divine and human, must retain only a conceptual status after they come to existence through an intimate union. This view corresponds to the argument that using number to count the natures of Christ would necessarily introduce their individual or separated existence and hence a counter-argument to the Chalcedonian position: "Hence if the divinity of Christ is not spatially separate from his soul and from his body, but is united to them in their infinite entirety from the moment it entered them, no one uses

'in two natures' of it, properly speaking, but rather 'out of two natures'."[41] This view represented a major challenge for the Chalcedonian authors and Maximus the Confessor tried to overcome it by innovating within the traditional logic of genus-species-individual that underlined that theory. This chapter will show that he achieved this by offering a truly metaphysical interpretation of the differentia as the binding concept of this triad.

Differentia as a logical tool in Maximus the Confessor

One major result of the previous discussion is that it has shown the differentia to be a fundamental concept in the interpretation of the common nature. Both Philoponus and Simplicius demonstrated that the logic of division through successive differentia affects the nature's commonality. However, as shown by Philoponus, this apparently neutral approach required by univocal predication and the logic of definition has implications for the understanding of (individual) existence itself. What then should the strategy be to avoid this conclusion? It should be an attempt to show that this view constrains reality to accommodate itself to the Procrustean logic of language and precisely this seems to be Maximus' method for countering the anti-Chalcedonian picture of Christ. Unsurprisingly, the vehicle for this was the notion of differentia by which he was able to give a different interpretation of nature's commonality. As scholars have noted, Maximus was well aware of ancient logic and he even might have contributed to the production of a manual of logic for the use of his Byzantine fellows.[42] He shared with the ancients the requirement to construe a definition through what the substance might be, rather than through negative assertions about it, and furthermore embraced the approach we have just seen of providing a definition of one's essence by means of the differentia.[43] However, he warned his readers that they must keep the differentia apart from division, thus confirming that these notions were easily confounded.[44] Yet, in contradistinction to Philoponus, who links the differentia and division as if they were logical correlatives, Maximus searches for what gives the differentia its innate power to constitute the species, as opposed to its divisive character. The double status of differentia as being both "divisive" and "constitutive" of species upon which Maximus seems to draw on here is theorised by Porphyry.[45] In this way, he goes beyond the logic of division to suggest that the constitution of the species from genus and differentia must also do justice to the generic aspect involved in this process. Maximus suggests that this is visible in the method of defining natures through genus and differentia because this includes the constitutive aspect of commonality given by the genus itself.[46] This is in staunch opposition to Philoponus's rather negative description of any method to build commonality on genus, for to the latter only "the differences applicable to the common genus, such as 'rational' and 'irrational,' have constituted a different nature."[47] Philoponus' argument is indeed right if viewed solely from the perspective of ancient logic, but it does not represent a constraint on Maximus' peculiar Christian manner of grounding differentia. As every nature proceeds from God, no matter what the nature's mode of existence in a species or in an individual might be, one must say that every nature shares with

all others the generic feature of being essentially constituted by God. In Maximus' hands, this generic feature of being created becomes famously analyzed in terms of being put into motion by God: "we accept that the Divine is immovable (. . .) whereas everything that has received its being *ex nihilo* is in motion (. . .)."[48] As long as the world is created and thus has a cause, it must be generically defined by this aspect, hence Maximus' natural argument in this context that essential motion is a mark of gaining existence, "since only that which has absolutely no being whatsoever (. . .) has neither motion nor existence."[49] Therefore, being created and thus being put into motion represents for Maximus a certain sign of having a generic existence, which transcends the limits of the vocabulary based on individual existence. Maximus' next step in the argumentation is to ground the logic of divisibility in the metaphysics of motion made available by the Christian idea of the creation of the world. In particular, he seeks generic unity by emphasising the differentia's status of being created by God and thus of being put into motion. The divisibility process thus receives here a dynamic representation intended to accommodate the idea that every substance is created by God.

The metaphysics of the differentia

The statement that every created being has a cause and is thus put into motion by its cause further results in portraying the *ousia* as undergoing differentiation in genera and species. This process follows a precise cosmological motion: "For it [substance] is moved from the most generic genus through the more generic genera to particular species, through which and in which it is naturally divided."[50] It is through this allocation of motion as an inborn power to move to the various genera and species that motion receives an ontologically constitutive power, and so becomes correlated with their existence:

> For the powerless, as that which is all over impotent, is solely that which is non-being. For every being has the inborn motion that is concrescent with the genus as constitutive differentia (συστατικὴν διαφορὰν); and it produces the definition of the subject, through which it is properly known that something is and what it is, [as a thing] having both sameness with beings of the same species and on the other hand difference from those heterospecific.[51]

Therefore, Maximus explicitly endows the constitutive differentia with the status of motion, which every being possesses because it is caused by God to exist as an individual of a species and a genus.[52] However, by connecting motion with the constitutive differentia (συστατικὴν διαφορὰν), Maximus wants to differentiate motion from other non-essential properties of being. In other words, motion or the power to move is constitutive of every being in that, as Maximus puts it, it is related to every existent by being "inborn" with it. Of course, every being must have a shape, be of a certain quantity etc., but once created it cannot be without the constitutive motion implanted in it by God. And crucial for the building of commonality is the fact that this motion is generic in the sense that it characterises

all beings with no exception or restriction placed upon them by their status of having individual or specific existence. The same must be true of Christ as man:

> The only valid proof that this "essence" [human essence] is present [in Christ] in its "entirety," moreover, is its natural, constitutive power (ἡ κατὰ φύσιν αὐτῆς συστατικὴ δύναμις), which one would not be mistaken in calling a "natural energy" (φυσικὴν ἐνέργειαν), properly and primarily characteristic of the nature in question (κυρίως τε καὶ πρώτως χαρακτηριστικὴν αὐτῆς).[53]

Therefore, by coming into this world and thus "being created" as man, Christ submits Himself to the analysis of motion as every other created being does. This requires that motion must be constitutive of his human essence, as Maximus claims above. And since in this picture "being created" logically foreruns being an "individual," the individual motions shown by Christ must be firstly linked to this all-encompassing generic motion and only secondarily to the specific and the individual forms they can take: "the most generic motion [is] constitutive of species and contains every property that naturally belongs to the essence (ὡς εἰδοποιὸν ὑπάρχουσαν κίνησιν γενικωτάτην πάσης τῆς φυσικῶς αὐτῇ προσούσης περιεκτικῆς ἰδιότητος . . .)."[54] Therefore, the differentia is not just a logical construct, as Philoponus suggests, but receives constitutive force because of its generic basis, as it constitutes the natures of the species, which are then shared by its members. It is thus not on account of the individuals' existence that their commonality comes to be judged here, but rather the opposite: the nature is shared in common by its members as it represents the basis for their specific capacities to move. It cannot be divided by its partakers because its existential impetus is due to God and not to the members themselves, despite the fact it exists only as instantiated in individuals.

Maximus holds that by allocating the genus the same *power to move*, the supreme genus of being would remain one and whole.[55] The species do therefore share in this whole, as if they are introduced in a series by proceeding from this whole: animal, footed, two-footed, for example, form a sequence in which each unit can be seen in the one before it. One might say, therefore, that "I am united with my dog" insofar as animality characterises us commonly. However, the contrast between activity and power now sets in: in me the active power takes the specific form of an ἐνέργεια of a rational being, while in a dog it becomes the instinctual activity able to differentiate it from other animals. But this divisive difference still preserves a union between us with respect to our common whole – the generic power to exist[56] – and this is what truly underlines Maximus' argument for the reality and unity of the universal. The commonality of nature thus means here that nature is a dynamic entity that bestows the same essential capacities to move on its partakers. The oneness of nature means that despite the fact that motions become specified and further individualised, they are all essentially derived from the same inborn generic power to move.[57]

In conclusion, the oneness of nature is at the same time specific and generic and it essentially consists in being a dynamic entity that is constituted by God. This

is a remarkable example of building commonality and genus-species relationship on the metaphysics of creation. It runs directly counter to Philoponus' idea that generic properties cannot be taken into account in determining substance by questioning the precise source of nature's essential properties. From this apparently non-informative idea, a non-trivial result is obtained: namely that all those properties are essentially motions which depend on underlying dynamic natures. Undoubtedly, this is one of the core ingredients that lay at the foundation of Maximus' thought on what is generic and universal.

A Platonic influence

The major tenet for grounding the reality of the common nature was achieved by Maximus through a metaphysical interpretation of the differentia. However, one crucial ingredient of that metaphysical move which now deserves a special emphasis is the link between motion and existence. We have seen already that Maximus provides a strong explanation for this within the Christian background of the creation of the world. However, he also often refers to previous authorities of whom we need to be aware. For instance, after stating that the only valid proof for the existence of the human nature of Christ is its constitutive power and motion, he continues by uncovering the source for that thought, "'since only that which has absolutely no being whatsoever' – according to that great teacher – 'has neither motion nor existence'."[58] The master Maximus here alludes to is Dionysius the Areopagite who, in the Confessor's interpretation, argues for the acceptance of two activities in Christ, which are approached by him in a unified way, divine-human.[59] Maximus' idea is to build the reality of Christ's human nature into Dionysius' connection of motion with existence, as the Areopagite explains this in the *Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*:

> To speak after the manner of men, is it not necessary that we should first begin to be, and then to do what belongs to us? For he who does not exist at all has neither movement nor even beginning. But he who actually exists does or suffers only those things suitable to his own condition.[60]

It is, however, not difficult to guess who is lurking in the background of this view, if one recalls Plato's *Sophist*. It is there that the principle shared by Dionysius and Maximus is first expressed in a clear-cut manner by the Giants who nonetheless phrase it in the corresponding formula of powers/capacities that are able to generate motion or undergo affection from it: "a thing really is if it has any capacity at all (. . .) to do something to something else or to have even the smallest things done to it."[61] The idea was further embraced by Aristotle, at least in his *Metaphysics Theta*,[62] and was then widely circulated within the Neoplatonic context, which most certainly constituted the final source of inspiration for Dionysius.[63] However, if here Dionysius, and Maximus then following him, make use only of the first part of the principle, which likens existence with the capacity to do or to

move in general, Maximus elsewhere shows that he is accustomed to the other side of the principle that links existence with the capacity to be acted upon from exterior. Finding himself under pressure by the anti-Chalcedonian idea that the use of the number "two" for the counting of Christ's natures was creating a division in Christ, Maximus replies that only self-subsistent beings act upon or can be affected by other beings, whereas for him number does not have such a power by itself.[64] This shows that the Confessor knows of the Platonic principle in its extended form and even employs it in his Christological arguments. The logic he implies in these disputes draws heavily on this principle, without which the anti-Chalcedonian model for the Christological union, represented by the union of soul and body, could not have been answered by Maximus. As with soul and body, for Christ as well, action is only unitary and single if it has a single synthetic nature at its origin. Yet if an action shows a power that transgresses the limits of the synthetic nature presumed to lie at its origin, as is for instance the case with the miracles performed by Christ, then by applying Plato's principle one is safe to conclude that there is a different constitutive power and nature at its origin. This fits well with another formulation of Plato's principle, known today as *Plato's criterion for priority*: x is prior to y if y cannot be without x and not vice versa.[65] Applied to our example, this means that in order for miraculous actions to take place, there must firstly be a correspondent power that causes them. In terms of priority, in order for motion to be possible, the active capacity or power to move must be granted and without this substantial power no substance can be said to exist: "For in the words of the great teacher [Dionysius], 'that which is completely lacking in power neither exists, nor is it something in particular, nor can it have anything whatsoever predicated of it.'"[66]

Therefore, in line with Maximus' logic, Plato's criterion of priority, as applied to power, introduces a new element in ontology (e.g. power) beyond the individuals which were the traditional building blocks of existence and so becomes the main pillar for Maximus' theory of immanent realism. It unveils the essential dynamic character of natures together with their essential integrity: "For the natural power (δύναμις) in each and every being is nothing other than the unalterable movement of nature (ἡ φύσεως κίνησις) toward activity/operation (ἐνέργειαν)."[67] Thus, power, and activity for Maximus follow a rule of ontological priority, in which activity depends on power and power is grounded in substance as an unalterable yet differentiated motion that proves the existence of the latter.[68]

Conclusion

I have argued that the key to Maximus' theory of immanent realism is his discernment of the metaphysical implications of the Christian idea of creation for the interpretation of the differentia. Without Maximus' metaphysical analysis of creation as motion, the all-pervading generic union would only be obtainable at the conceptual level. In particular, this union would not be possible in a system in which the differentia was not metaphysically analysed as a motion that has at its basis the same generic inborn power to move. Through a metaphysical distillation

of the Christian cosmological view, Maximus was able to ground the generic unity for all beings in nothing but the differentiating unity of nature. With this, he could reinterpret the differentiation of nature as representing the essential dynamics of nature, which causes no division of nature as everyone is equally caused by God. Hence, the all-binding principle of nature is that nature is generically dynamic, which is simply the ontological counterpart of saying that nature has the same origin or cause in God. But as the Neoplatonic Simplicius had shown, to have the same cause does not produce real commonality with necessity. Maximus' theory warrants us to conclude that this is true except when the cause is absolutely one and as such determines one single manner of imparting existence to its effects, this is precisely a key element in Maximus' argument for besides this scheme of univocal generation based in the logic of creation ex nihilo, motion would not be able to represent a "generic principle of nature" anymore.[69] It would, eventually, denote one of the many relational aspects between a cause and its effect without, however, bearing a strong ontological import. It is perhaps for this reason that the Christian meaning of hypostasis, understood as the building block of created existence, is more than its pagan counterpart. The hypostasis contains a generic aspect of existence as if it were embedded in it from its creation by God, despite the generic aspect of existence being something different from the individuality of the hypostasis itself.

It is equally important to observe that by grouping the differences under their common generic trait of being motions, Maximus also effected a change in the traditional logic, as that logic had forbidden the inclusion of the differentia into the genus.[70] In Maximus' theory, this corresponds to viewing the differentia as no longer restricted to showing the qualitative aspect of being or the "what sort of thing" something might be. Now, with Maximus building into its generic character, the differentia transcends its qualitative force into a substantial ingredient of being and is thus able to indicate the "what" of something (τί ἐστι) as well, a function which traditionally only the genus could fulfill. However, on account of his metaphysical equivalence of creation with motion, Maximus was able to consider every specific and even individual motion as being in itself the generic motion implanted by God in every being at the moment of creation. Were things otherwise, another cause of the essence and implicitly the "inborn" essential motion of beings must be offered in place of God, which for a Christian is absurd. In terms of predication, the result of this surprising metaphysical move is astonishing: it allows one to predicate a generic or universal property such as motion of an individual without necessarily considering it in a species. This is exactly the case with Christ, who is an individual God-Man without having a species of "Christs" at his origin.[71] And this allows Maximus to reason that Christ was a composed hypostasis existing "in two" natures and not a synthetic nature resulting "out of" two, as Philoponus' logic imperatively required. The full reality of Christ's human nature, which was bracketed in the anti-Chalcedonian theory, is now regained through the integration of the Platonic principle of existence with the merely Aristotelian rule of predication shared by Maximus. Therefore, according to Maximus' theory of the differentia as inborn motion, Christ exists in two natures because their reality can be appreciated independently of his hypostasis. Without any doubt

this represents an innovative attempt to leap over the logical constraints of the genus-species-individual relationship and establish commonality on a different metaphysical basis. And Maximus' originality consists in the identification of this metaphysical foundation with the Christian theory of the creation of the world.

Notes

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1 For more on immanent realism, see Erismann 2011a.
2 See Zachhuber 2013: 425–470.
3 For a recent account of Maximus' life and work, see Allen and Neil 2015.
4 See, for instance, Erismann 2015 and Tollefsen 2015.
5 See Gerson 2004.
6 See Lloyd 1962.
7 Porphyry, *Isag*. 1.10–15; Barnes 2003: 3.
8 For Porphyry's theory of the "individual," see Chiaradonna 2000.
9 For further details, see Ammonius, *In Porphyrii Isagogen* 10–20.
10 See Lloyd 1981.
11 See Zachhuber 2013 and Erismann 2015.
12 I am indebted to Zachhuber 2013 for this section of the chapter.
13 Traditionally, that work figured among Basil's letters, but recent scholarship established its paternity in Gregory of Nyssa. See, for details, Zachhuber 2003.
14 Basil, *Ep*. 38.2.19–26; 1.82.
15 Basil, *Ep*. 214.4.9–15; 3.205; Zachhuber 2013: 437.
16 See, for instance, Zachhuber 2013: 428–436 on the Basil vs. Apollinarius debate over the idea that divine substance cannot be a pre-existent genus participated in by the divine persons.
17 "For species – and still more, genera – gather the many items into a single nature; whereas the individuals or singulars, in contrary fashion, always divide the one into a plurality. For by sharing in the species the many men are one man, and by the individuals the one and common man is several – for the singular is always divisive whereas the common is collective and unificatory" (Porphyry, *Isag*. 6, 19–25; Barnes 2003: 7).
18 Gregory of Nyssa, *Ad Ablabium*, *GNO* 3, t. 1, 40.24–41, 12; Zachhuber 2013: 446–447.
19 On this interpretation of Porphyry, see Lloyd 1990: 49–53.
20 For further details, see Erismann 2014a.
21 Gregory of Nyssa, *Ad Ablabium*, 53.7–15; Schaff 1886: 2.5, 335.
22 See Erismann 2008: 51–66.
23 In this respect, see Aristotle's definition of substance as an individual in the *Categories*: "that which is called a substance most strictly, primarily, and most of all – is that which is neither said of a subject nor in a subject, e.g. the individual man or the individual horse" (Aristotle, *Cat*. 2a13; Barnes 1984: 4).
24 Zachhuber 2013: 458–461.
25 For a comprehensive analysis of the theses of immanent realism, see Erismann 2011a.
26 For further details, see Grillmeier and Hainthaler 1995.
27 Lebon 1951: 425–580.
28 See Erismann 2011b: 81.
29 On Maximus' opposite view, which is supportive of the use of number "two" in Christology, see Mateiescu 2017b.

30 See Mateiescu 2018.
31 On Philoponus' Tritheism, see Lang 2001.
32 For a similar account of Philoponus' use of philosophy in his theological arguments, see Erismann 2014b: 143–160.
33 Philoponus, *Arbit*. 21–22, Lang 2001: 191. For illustration, some Greek correspondents to some key concepts have been inserted as they were preserved in John of Damascus, *Liber de haeresibus* 5.52.
34 Philoponus, *In Cat.* 67, 31–34; Sirkel *et al*. 2015: 104.
35 Philoponus, *In Cat.* 58, 19–21. Sirkel *et al*. 2015: 95.
36 This does not mean that "man" is not irrational as well, but it is only meant to exclude the possibility that this property can describe the essence of "man".
37 Simplicius, *In Cat.* 83.1, 13–15; de Haas and Fleet 2001: 24.
38 However, Simplicius elsewhere (*In Cat*. 80, 1–10) seems to suggest the idea that what is immanent is still predicated of individuals in virtue of its "likeness to the transcendent [universal]."
39 See, for further details, Mateiescu 2018: 94–102 .
40 Philoponus, *In Cat*. 58, 19–21.
41 Philoponus, *Arbit*. 45, Lang 2001: 214.
42 For details, see Törönen 2007: 11–35, and Roueché 1980.
43 See, for instance, Maximus, *Amb. Io.* 16, 17 and 22.
44 Maximus, *Ep*. 12, PG 91: 469a–b. See also Törönen 2007: 89.
45 Porphyry, *Isag*. 3, 9–12.
46 Maximus, *Amb*. *Th.* 2, PG 91: 1037c–d.
47 Philoponus, *Arbit*. 32, Lang 2001: 199.
48 Maximus, *Amb. Io.* 7, PG 91: 1069b.
49 Maximus, *Amb. Th*. 5, PG 91: 1048a–b.
50 Maximus, *Amb*. *Io.* 10, PG 91: 1177c.
51 Maximus, *Opusc*. 16, PG 91, 200b8–c15: Τὸ γὰρ ἀδύναμον, ὡς ἀδρανὲς πάντῃ μόνον ἐστὶ τὸ μὴ ὄν. Πᾶν γὰρ εἴ τι τῶν ὄντων, συστατικὴν ἔχει διαφοράν, τὴν ἔμφυτον κίνησιν τῷ γένει συμπαραλαμβανομένην, καὶ ποιοῦσαν τοῦ ὑποκειμένου τὸν ὁρισμὸν, δι' οὗ ὅτι ἐστὶ καὶ τί ἐστι κυρίως γνωρίζεται, πρός τε τὰ ὁμοειδῆ τὸ ἀπαράλλακτον ἔχον, καὶ τὸ διάφορον αὖθις πρὸς τὰ ἑτεροειδῆ (Trans. S.M.).
52 As noted by an anonymous reviewer for this chapter, Maximus' approach here is tantamount to imposing an ontological and immanent taxonomical order, rather than constructing the argument from logical grounds. This method, however, has the virtue of showing us how key terms in logic (e.g. differentia) are metaphysically laden and how this, in itself, has the force to lead to different logical conclusions. In Maximus' view reported in this paper, this logical side of the argument corresponds to predicating existence "in" two natures about Christ.
53 Maximus, *Amb. Th.* 5, PG 91: 1048a–b; Constas 2014: 33.
54 *Idem*.
55 Maximus, *Amb*. *Io.* 41, PG 91: 1312c–e.
56 Maximus, *Amb*. *Io.* 41, PG 91: 1312c–d.
57 Maximus, *Amb. Th.* 5, PG *91:*1049c–d.
58 Maximus, *Amb*. *Th*. 5, PG 91: 1048a–b; Constas 2014: 33
59 On the importance of Dionysius to Maximus' thought, see Louth 2006: 19–33.
60 Dionysius, *EH* II.1*,* Heil and Ritter 2012: 69.9–12; PG 3: 392b; Parker 1897: 54.
61 Plato, *Soph*. 247d8–e4.
62 See, for details, Beere 2009: 33–64.
63 As the series editors have rightly commented on an earlier draft of this chapter, there have been eventually many other channels (such as possibly Iamblichus with the traid *being-dunamis-mind* or Proclus' with *being-life-mind*) through which the philosophical account of *dunamis* has influenced the Christian thought. For an overview of *dunamis* in several such Neoplatonic contexts, which includes Dionysius, see Romano and Cardullo 1996. As concerns their echo in Maximus, see more recently

Lauritzen 2012 who (unconvincingly, in my opinion) connects Maximus' view of *energeia* with that of Proclus. Rather, it seems that Plotinus' theory of the *nous* as being "in actuality all particular intellects and potentially each of them" (*Enn*. 6.2.20), an argument that bears important relevance for the issue of universals viz. genus and species (see Lloyd 1956) anticipates well Maximus' theory of immanent realism as based on differentia as *dunamis*. Certainly, further work is needed in this direction, which needs to move beyond the quest for terminological similarities between Neoplatonic concepts and Christian notions into a more comprehensive analysis in terms of the rationale and argumentative strategy for their employment.

64 Maximus, *Ep*. 12, PG 91: 473c–d.
65 See, for instance, Beere 2009: 294.
66 Maximus, *Amb. Th.* 5, PG 91: 1052c; Constas 2014: 43.
67 Maximus, *Amb. Io.* 20*,* PG 91*:* 1237b; Constas 2014: 411 (translation modified).
68 Maximus, *Opusc*. 1, PG 91, 33b7–12.
69 Maximus, *Amb. Io*. 41, PG 91: 1312c.
70 On the principle of traditional logic that the differentia must come "from outside" the genus, see Lloyd 1962.
71 Maximus, *Ep*. 13, PG 91: 517a–d. See, for further details, Mateiescu 2017a.

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12 That and how *perichōrēsis* differs from participation

The case of Maximus the Confessor

Jordan Daniel Wood

Hans Urs von Balthasar's *Cosmic Liturgy* commended Maximus Confessor (d. 662) as among the most profound Christian thinkers in late antiquity for thinking through the God-world relation.[1] Soon after Polycarp Sherwood narrowed the focus, calling for a specific study of "participation" in Maximus.[2] Hence followed important studies like those of Eric Perl and Torstein Theodor Tollefsen,[3] and of others for whom Maximus conceives a more precise philosophical understanding of participation.[4] He does use participation language often, as Marius Portaru documents.[5] And yet I favour Larchet's more modest assessment that its exact meaning in Maximus scarcely rises beyond the basic and fairly common idea that the one God is the sole source of the multiplicity of effects such that the latter depend on and so in some sense take part in God's self-subsistence.[6]

The problem is not just that "participation" in Maximus proves hazy, or, if you like, appropriately supple.[7] It is that participation's language and logic are everywhere "integrated into a Christian context."[8] And that context, far from resolving the participation question, tends to exacerbate it. In this chapter specifically, I argue that and indicate how the logic of participation understood Neoplatonically differs from that of *perichōrēsis*. Neoplatonic participation requires that the modality of lower effects come precisely through the qualitative limitation of higher, actual causes, such that there cannot be modal simultaneity or symmetry in one and the same concrete reality.[9] Maximian *perichōrēsis*, by contrast, posits just this modal symmetry not only in the God-man Jesus Christ, but in the existential condition of the deified human person too.

I mount this argument in three steps. First, I briefly flag *perichōrēsis*'s provenance in mainly Cappadocian trinitarian theology (fourth century). This shows how reflection on the relationship between Father and Son had to move beyond participation logic. The second section turns in earnest to Maximus. It considers how he follows and systematises Gregory of Nazianzus's Christological use of *perichōrēsis*. Here we have the primary instance where Maximus conceives a perichoretic union between naturally superior and inferior modes of being. And here again we have a union that exceeds Neoplatonic participation for that very reason. A final section emphasises Maximus's most distinctive use of *perichōrēsis*, namely his use of it to describe the existential state of the deified person.

Trinitarian provenance

Maximus's most proximate inspiration for the logic of *perichōrēsis* was undoubtedly pro-Nicene trinitarian theology, mostly of Cappadocian vintage. In its great effort to distend an infinite ontological gap between Creator and creature and to plant the Son in the former's soil, Nicene theology moved consciously beyond earlier trinitarian articulations. Take Origen's (d. c.253). He too sought a clear distinction between the Son and other creatures.[10] But he also sensed a distinction governing the Son's relation to the Father. Whatever this distinction's precise character,[11] Origen could say that the Father alone was "very God," ὁ αὐτόθεος, while the Son was God "by participation" (μετοχῇ).[12] Thus the Son is "the archetypical image of the many images," *the* Word with *the* God (Father). This Son shows himself the perfect exemplar for all lower participations in divinity.[13]

Thus conceiving the Three Persons certainly courts advantages. It avoids both Sabellianism and Arianism, for starters. And yet, as later anti-Origenists alleged, it also sounds subordinationist.[14] If the Son is not very God, divinity itself, then the Son is not *wholly* God as the Father is. No wonder later figures like Gregory of Nazianzus (d. 390) explicitly forbid "degrees of divinity" among the Persons.[15] In their essential oneness they are like indistinguishable rays emitting from three suns; and yet three whole, different suns they remain. Or to use the terms the Cappadocian fathers themselves refined and brandished, the Trinity is a single nature or essence in three hypostases, distinguished and related as universal to particular.[16] But not, notice, in the way a Platonic universal or "kind" relates to its particular, partial, modally qualified instances – lest there be three individual gods classed under one common genus, "divinity," each subsisting in a less qualified mode.[17] Rather: here in the mysterious life of the Triune God, total identity (essence) and total difference (hypostases) exist as a single reality (God).

It is true that neither the Cappadocian fathers nor Maximus use the term *perichōrēsis* or its cognate forms to describe the Trinity proper. That precise verbal connection comes slightly later, in Ps.-Cyril (seventh to eighth century) and John of Damascus (d. 749).[18] Its logic, though, seems pellucid enough and features prominently in Maximus. Perichoretic logic derives ultimately from and indeed *is* trinitarian logic itself. It is a logic of "whole in whole, wholly." Here it signifies that even in their ineffable, essential, modal, and actual identity each Person remains both distinct and utterly undiminished in its difference.

Maximus knows that this sort of simultaneous identity and difference exceeds participation logic. "For the Monad is truly a Monad," he writes, "not the origin of the things that come after it, as if it had expanded after a state of contraction, like something naturally poured out and proliferating into a multitude."[19] In God the common or universal essence in no sense precedes the distinct hypostases, as if it were the superior cause they participate. Instead there are two logics at work even here – that of essence and that of hypostasis.[20] God is monadic by essence, trinitarian by hypostasis. And yet these are simultaneous, even identical to each other *in fact*: "The Trinity is truly a Monad, for such it is (ἐστίν); and the Monad is truly a Trinity, for as such it subsists (ὑφέστηκεν), since there is one Godhead

that is monadically and subsists trinitarianly (οὖσά τε μοναδικῶς καὶ ὑφισταμένη τριαδικῶς)."[21]

For Maximus God's essential Oneness and hypostatic Threeness are inseparable. They constitute a single existential reality itself reducible to neither entirely. One and Three cannot, therefore, here relate according to the typical Neoplatonic logic of participation. "Therefore both the division and the union are extraordinary."[22] But this also means that the Three do not relate among themselves as co-participants do either. Their whole mode of existence proves "extraordinary" just because they do not relate "as one man with another," for example.[23] Two instances of humanity make two human beings presumably because humanity itself entails more than either instance exemplifies by itself – at least naturally. Two Persons of the Godhead, though, do not make two gods. And this is not simply because they share a common essence. So do two humans, after all. It is because their essence *is* all Three each and entire, *and* because all Three actually penetrate one another each and entire.

> For the divinity is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and the divinity is in the Father, and in the Son, and in the Holy Spirit. The same whole is in the whole Father and the whole Father is in the same whole; and the same whole is in the whole Son and the whole Son is in the same whole; and the same whole is in the whole Holy Spirit and the whole Holy Spirit is in the same whole. . . . For the whole Father is perfectly in the whole Son and in the Spirit, and the whole Son is perfectly in the whole Father and in the Spirit; and the whole Spirit is perfectly in the whole Father and in the Son. Therefore, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one God.[24]

That an entire hypostasis could penetrate another entire hypostasis such that this is what it means, *in actu*, for them to have a single power and essence – that names the peculiar logic of the Trinity, the logic of *perichōrēsis*. The Son's mode of actual existence does not simply originate from his prior, the Father, as if the Son participates the Father piecemeal. Light from Light, yes, but also and most fully "Light *in* Light."[25] Whole in whole, wholly – that states the trinitarian "mode of existence."[26]

Perichōrēsis, then, boasts God the Trinity as its logic's autochthonous provenance. Hence it betrays three features:

1 ineffable identity (here of nature, power, and act)
2 total penetration in actuality (here of persons)
3 total preservation of integrity (here of persons)

Christological application

For Maximus, only the Son's Incarnation reveals God's trinitarian mode of existence.[27] Christ alone "initiates" us "into the mystery of the mode of existence [τὴν πῶς ὕπαρξιν] of the creative Cause of things, since He himself is by essence the

Cause of things."[28] Notice the rationale here. It is not just that Christ instructed us by words that God exists trinitarianly – say, by teaching us the Our Father. It is the very fact that the one who so instructs us is also "by essence the Cause of things." If this man who commends prayer to the Father for the coming of the Spirit – if this man, Maximus is saying, is himself very God by nature, then his very existence among us discloses "a new understanding of God," "the new proclamation of truth."[29]

It is quite new indeed. What sort of logic, after all, could abide that the divine infinity and a finite creature exist as a single fact? Not any philosophical logic of participation. Cleaving to that logic leads one either to Greek polytheism – i.e. to admitting that all Three are divine "by a participation close to that of rational beings" – or to Jewish "atheism," as Maximus puts it – i.e. to denying that the Word and Spirit are essentially God like the Father.[30] And Maximus recalls that Dionysius himself proscribes participation as the logic of the Word's historical Incarnation. Christ "is not called 'man' insofar as he is cause of men, but as being that which in the entirety of its essence is truly man."[31] Note the emphasis on Christ's *entire* human essence (κατ' οὐσίαν ὅλην). This points up a most remarkable fact: somehow in Christ, who is wholly God and wholly man by nature,[32] the entire mode, power, and actuality of the most superior existence (the divinity's) was joined directly and without causal or natural mediation to an inferior mode of existence (humanity's). And, to name the fundamental issue of this event, because his two natures are one only in and as his very hypostasis and therefore not at all one by nature, they are truly *identical* in reality – one fact, one existence, one deed, one ontic mode that accepts the whole natural modality of both the uncreated and the created without the slightest diminution to either.[33] Maximus calls this simply "the unified mode of the Lord's activities."[34]

But if these two infinitely different natural modalities are concretely identical in Christ, what happens when their proper powers reduce to act? That vexing question animated the whole monenergist controversy, and Maximus mustered one of his most distinctive Christological contributions to meet it.[35] Monenergists seemed to have contemplated several ways to answer the question – that Christ's natural powers coalesce into a synthetic activity, or that the higher power deploys the lower as instrument of its own activity, etc. – all of which Maximus rejected.[36] He resolved the issue by applying perichoretic logic to Christ's two natures and their respective powers and acts. And why not, since the very Son who is Christ is himself already implicated in a perichoretic mode of existence – right there in the heart of divinity? Indeed, with Maximus *perichōrēsis* becomes, for the first time, the towering summit of Chalcedonian Christology.[37]

Maximus's reasoning appears to run thus. Any concession that Christ's activity might have been a kind of "theandric" mixture or synthesis or instance of the relation between first and second-order causality cannot but derive from a natural power – and so a nature – that is itself just as synthetic or composite. Monenergism implies monophysitism. The nature of an activity discloses (because it depends on) the natural power by which an agent acts. So if Christ's activity is hybrid, so is his power, and so finally is his nature which contains this power.

We cannot therefore admit any natural or essential mediation between Christ's humanity and divinity. The former is not a qualified mode of the latter, say.[38] Only the very Person of the Word mediates between his two infinitely different natures.[39] But because his hypostasis is not itself nature[40] – though it is indeed a positive reality – it can accommodate the fullness of each nature's power, mode, and act without pressure to qualify it in any way.[41] This is just how he interprets Dionysius's "a certain new theandric activity."[42]

> "And in a manner beyond man, he truly became man," since he maintained the modes (which are above nature), along with the principles (which are according to nature), united and unimpaired. The conjunction of these was beyond what is possible, but he for whom nothing is impossible became their true union, and was the hypostasis in neither of them exclusively, in no way acting through one of the natures in separation from the other, but in all that he did he confirmed the presence of the one through the other, since he is truly both.[43]

And so Maximus retains in Christology the three earmarks of *perichōrēsis* we observed in trinitarian theology. Only here these apply to Christ's two natures (not to two divine Persons) and their proper modes and activities.[44] In him created and uncreated natures enjoy [1] ineffable identity (of person), [2] total penetration in actuality (of natural modes/activities), and [3] total preservation of integrity (of natural modes/activities). This is precisely why and how Christ discloses the Trinity's own mode of existence. Christ's deeds – walking on water, curing by speech, dying as Life, living through death – prove that "the human activity is conjoined with the divine power" (συμφυεῖσαν δεικνὺς τῇ θεϊκῇ δυνάμει τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην), indeed "is completely interpenetrated by it" (δι' ὅλου περικεχώρηκε)," such that in his Incarnation God the Word

> united his transcendent mode of existence with the principle of his human nature, so that the ongoing existence of that nature might be confirmed by the newness of modes of existence, not suffering any change at the level of its inner principle, and thereby make known his power that is beyond infinity, recognised in the generation of opposites.[45]

Through Christ's life and actions we witness the complete *perichōrēsis* of two infinitely different natures; through that *perichōrēsis* of natures we perceive the supreme oneness of his Person; through his Person the distinction of Persons in God; through the single activity of the Three the ineffable oneness of the divine essence. Christ reveals the Trinity, and precisely because perichoretic logic proves to be the existential character of both.

Consider just how strange this idea would have seemed against the backdrop of the ancient Greek philosophy Maximus likely knew. Many have noted *perichōrēsis*'s distant provenance in Stoic physics, particularly its concept of "mixture."[46] Stoics seem to have held that two or more distinct bodies could pass

through or mix with one another and yet preserve each's "own essence" with its correlate qualities without depletion.[47] Neoplatonists, for their part, did appropriate this notion but only by restricting its application to the ideal realm – to Proclus's henads, for example.[48] Notice that both conceive and apply perichoretic logic only in a horizontal plane, as it were: the Stoics, who rejected Platonic Ideas with a fervour that outdid even Aristotle, allowed *perichōrēsis* among bodies, the Neoplatonists solely among intelligibles (and intellectual) beings. Neither applied *perichōrēsis* vertically, and certainly not to the One's intercourse with a particular one among the Many.[49]

Neoplatonists had especially good reason to refrain. It would have made nonsense of the very idea of causal procession (and return). Plotinus's doctrine of "double activity," a valiant attempt to combine Aristotelian and Platonic logics of act (horizontal and vertical, respectively), openly belies any symmetrical penetration between higher and lower levels of being.[50] Asymmetry, sure. The perennial problem of participation was the problem of how distinct existences might ultimately be one, and how that One reality, whatever and however it be, could be wholly present to the manifold.[51] But, as Proclus insists near the start of his *Elements of Theology*, although the One is wholly present to all as the very unity of the manifold, each instance of the manifold is itself "both one and not-one."[52] Higher beings, superior causes (and certainly the One), are "self-sufficient in essence and activity," and by that very self-sufficiency emanate inferior existences that depend on the higher for "completeness."[53] The essence or nature of every effect (pre)exists in its cause "in a primary mode" (πρώτως), the cause in its effect "in a secondary mode" (δευτέρως). Hence no effect – with its proper nature and activity – is ever simply identical to the cause lest there be no discernible procession at all. But – and here lies the crucial matter – it is also impossible that there be "nothing in common or identical in both," lest the effect "not arise from [the cause's] existence."[54] What makes an effect an effect is that it possesses a *nature* and *power* identical to its cause, but in a more determinate, more qualified, lesser mode. It is "like" its cause.[55]

Modal asymmetry is the structure of vertical causality: the whole cause obtains in its effect in the effect's proper mode (procession). Yet never is the whole effect *qua* effect in the whole cause – since, of course, the whole effect is always in the whole cause "in a primary mode" (remaining). If ever it returned to the whole cause, it would simply *be* the cause itself and assume its proper mode (reversion).[56] Iamblichus, in fact, counters Porphyry's aversion to the idea that certain gods are assigned certain locales or elements by repurposing the asymmetrical structure of participation in order to defend theurgical uses of finite media (certain temples, certain words, certain materials, etc.). Just as sunlight "proceeds throughout the totality of existence" yet remains in its own prior modality, so too with the divine nature, which assuredly stands in "no relation of symmetry" to its participants below.[57] Thus:

> In respect of entities which are homogeneous in essence and potency, or indeed of the same species or genus, it is possible to conceive of some type

> of encompassing or direct control; but with regard to such beings as are completely and in all respects transcendent, how in this case can one properly conceive of any *reciprocal interchange*, *or total interpenetration*, or circumscription of individuals, or encompassing of localities, or anything of the sort?[58]

Eschatological application

Perhaps, then, as in Dionysius, the Christological application remains an isolated and exceptional instance.[59] In Christ, it's true, we behold an ineffable *perichōrēsis* of a cause's whole mode (divinity) and its effect's whole mode (humanity), which obviously exceeds participation logic. But maybe the fact that the Word is a divine person makes his case a unique, one-off occurrence largely responsive to the particular conditions of a creation devastated and in need of reintegration. Maybe creation's basic logic is participation logic Neoplatonically conceived, but creation's failure required an extraordinary *fiat*. Maybe, one might say, God's antecedent will legislates a world that works quite well outside the perichoretic logic of the Trinity or Christ, and the latter came about only according to God's consequent will.[60]

There might be decent systematic or philosophical reasons to carve things up that way, but it is certainly not how Maximus does it. We see this most clearly in his eschatological application of *perichōrēsis* to the deified human person. God "wholly interpenetrates all who are worthy" (ὡς ὅλον ὅλοις τοῖς ἀξίοις . . . περιχωρήσαντος).[61] Deification, as Maximus's famous *tantum-quantum* principle stipulates, refers just as much to God's *descent* into and total penetration of the saint as it does to the saint's own *ascent* and total penetration of God. These two movements are really the same event, the same occurrence, the same fact.[62] Thus Maximus introduces an irrepressible modal symmetry into the very heart of creation's perfection in, return to, and final union with the one God.

Consider how Maximus adjudicates two apparently contradictory scriptures. The Apostle John says, "God is light" (1 John 1:5). But two verses later he exhorts, "If we walk in the light, *as He is in the light*" (1 John 1:7). What does it mean to say God both *is* and *is in* light? Maximus answers:

> God, who is truly light according to His essence, is in those who 'walk in Him' through the virtues, so that they too truly become light. Just as all the saints, who on account of their love for God become light by participation in that which is light by essence, so too that which is light by essence, on account of its love for man, becomes light in those who are light by participation. If, therefore, because of virtue and knowledge we are in God as in light, God Himself, as light, is in us who are light. For God who is light by nature comes to be in that which is light by imitation, just as the archetype [comes to be] in the image.[63]

Note two crucial points here. First Maximus does employ the distinction between being something "by essence" and "by participation." We ostensibly meet vertical,

Platonic (or exemplarist) causality here. But then, second, the archetype does a most un-Platonic thing: it *descends* or "comes to be" or even "becomes" (γίνεται) participated light (i.e. light in a qualified or finite mode). There is no hint that this is mere metaphor. Quite the opposite, really, and for two reasons. For one thing, the context of the second scripture ("as He is in the light") clearly refers to Jesus Christ.[64] And then too Maximus assigns a clear motive to Light's descent, namely "on account of its love for mankind" (διὰ φιλανθρωπίαν) – a motive everywhere linked to the Word's historical Incarnation.[65] And so, per the previous section, the logic of descent here is not Platonic.[66] Nor is it simply the Aristotelian logic of the archetype's realisation in the imitator – which we will see presently at *Amb. Io*. 21.15. It's both at once. It is a claim that in the deified person God descends and "becomes" the very participated mode (and activity) of that person, all while retaining the divine mode unmuted and unqualified and unmediated.

And yet what is perhaps most remarkable about Maximus's eschatological use of *perichōrēsis* is that it flagrantly transgresses the very boundary painted so thickly by Neoplatonists. Maximus terminates a lengthy lucubration on deification in a traditional trope: our deification glides along a trajectory of increasing intensity from the primordial "image of God" to ever-greater "likeness" to him.[67] Now, Maximus can comfortably and occasionally wield this trope in just its traditional sense.[68] But not here. Inspired by Heb 10:1, he sets it on a more lateral or historical trajectory that moves from shadow to image to truth – all a movement of the one Word. He assigns the Word's "shadow" to the Old Testament (represented by John the Baptist), his "image" to the New Testament (represented by John the Evangelist), and his "truth" to our future union with him in deification. "The Gospel," writes Maximus, "possesses the image of true things" to come,

> And it is through this image that those who choose the pure and undefiled life of the Gospel, through their strict exercise of the commandments, take possession of the likeness of the good things of the age to come, and are made ready by the Word through the hope that they will be spiritually vivified by their reception of the archetype of these true things, and so become living images of Christ, or rather become identical to Him through grace (rather than being a mere simulacrum), or even, perhaps, become the Lord Himself, if such an idea is not too onerous for some to bear.[69]

The Word does not merely hover in a purely ideal modality only to be approximated by its permutations, confined as they are to spatio-temporal vicissitudes. Nor is it simply his exterior activity that proceeds instead of his very self. No. Union with the archetype is simultaneously the archetype's own advent in the imitator. This downward condescension of archetype to image derives, as Ayroulet has cogently shown, from a distinctly Aristotelian rather than Platonic conception of the archetype-image relation. Aristotle thinks a work of art – a poem or play, say – achieves its completion solely in its reproduction or imitation in the onlooker, so that the archetype-image relation enjoys a kind of "existential simultaneity": the archetype possesses the power of this act *in itself*,

to be sure, but attains actuality only *in the imitator*.[70] Clearly Maximus does not mean the Word's divine essence as such is realised only in the image or imitator. But there is more to God than the divine essence as such. And this "more" – the person of the Word (or any of the Three) – is what allows and even requires *a real* (though not essential) sense in which the divine archetype must condescend in order to complete the "truth that is to come," the deification and perfection of all creation.

The archetype's descent makes the participant "identical to him" (ταὐτὸν αὐτῷ), to Christ. More, Maximus's very language here seems consciously to transcend both Proclean and Dionysian views of final return. Dionysius famously defined deification thus: "the *theōsis* is the likeness (ἀφομοίωσις) to and union with God, as far as possible."[71] Maximus claims, we become the Lord himself "rather than" remain "a mere simulacrum" (καὶ ταὐτὸν αὐτῷ μᾶλλον κατὰ τὴν χάριν ἢ ἀφομοίωμα, τυχὸν δὲ καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ Κύριος).

This is the inexorable outcome of perichoretic logic applied eschatologically. These identity claims recur in Maximus.[72] And it leads finally to something Neoplatonic participation explicitly forbade: that the whole deified person *also* penetrates the whole of very God.

> And finally, in addition to all this, had man united created nature with the uncreated through love (oh, the wonder of God's love for mankind!), he would have shown them to be *one and the same by the state of grace, the whole man pervading the whole God*, and becoming everything that God is, without, however, identity in essence, and receiving the whole God instead of himself, and obtaining as a kind of prize for his ascent to God the absolutely unique God, who is the goal of the motion of things that are moved, and the firm and unmoved stability of things that are carried along to Him, and the limit (itself limitless and infinite) of every definition, order, and law, whether of mind, intellect, or nature.[73]

The whole deified person interpenetrates the whole God, and the whole God the whole deified person. Again, certainly not by essence. But the Incarnation reveals a deeper logic at work even in God himself, *perichōrēsis*, such that God can become in hypostasis what He is not by essence. No surprise, then, when we eventually find Maximus saying that the ground for our *perichōrēsis* with God is God the Word's personal condescension to and self-identification with us. It is his own Incarnation that establishes a symmetry unthinkable in accounts where participation logic inscribes an inviolable *asymmetry* into the whole God-world relation:

> For they say that God and man are paradigms of each other, so that as much as man, enabled by love, has divinized himself for God, to that same extent God is humanized for man by His love for mankind; and as much as man has manifested God who is invisible by nature through the virtues, to that same extent man is rapt by God in mind to the unknowable.[74]

We can enjoy an identity with God that exceeds participation only because God himself is more than a mere essence or energy. Christ revealed as much in person. His ecstasy as and into us invites ours as and into him. As the Apostle said, we shall become "one flesh" (Col 1:18; Eph 5:30–31).[75]

Conclusion

I have sought to demonstrate that and how the logics of *perichōrēsis* and Neoplatonic participation differ. *perichōrēsis*'s trinitarian origins brand it with three crucial marks: [1] there is an ineffable identity of two entities; [2] the two thus identified penetrate each other completely; [3] and yet even in this actual interpenetration they preserve their respective modal integrities perfectly intact. The Christological application adds a fourth, more stunning feature: [4] that the three prior marks can characterise even a *vertical perichōrēsis* between naturally superior and inferior modes of existence. That Maximus dares apply vertical *perichōrēsis* to the creature's deified state – its full return to God – shows that he does not think its logic confined to the Christ event but rather indicative of the God-world relation itself.

Whether this view evacuates the historical Incarnation of its primacy, or on the contrary proves that event so primary that it can incorporate the very particularity of all events remains an open question for systematic and philosophical theology. Less open, I think, is the exegetical observation that Maximus conceives perichoretic logic as surpassing (and thus not simply negating) the logic of Neoplatonic participation, and that he envisions the former as ultimately governing the latter. How and why he might have come to such a conviction – what, I mean, were the precise influences and historical circumstances that could have occasioned such a profound view of the God-world relation – I leave for another study.

Notes

1 Von Balthasar 2003: 15–18.
2 Sherwood 1964: 435–436.
3 Perl 1991: esp. ch. 6; Tollefsen 2008 and 2012.
4 Lévy 2006, for instance.
5 Portaru 2012.
6 Larchet 1996: 600–602; Tollefsen 2001 criticises Larchet, but does not to my mind add much more than what Larchet himself already admitted, namely that participation stresses "la distance qui subsiste entre la nature de l'homme divinisé et la nature divine elle-même" (600).
7 So Portaru 2012: 296, offers this working definition: "the relation between the One and the many, existence and its principle and how the connection between them is made. This is, I think, the most general and open philosophical understanding of participation."
8 Portaru 2012: 317.
9 So Siorvanes 1996: 72: "participation (μέθεξις) emphasises that an inferior cannot possess a superior entire"; see too *infra*, "Christological application."
10 Origen, *Princ*. 1.3.3–4, 1.4.4–5, 2.9.2, 4.4.1.

11 Balás 1975: 263, notes that Origen conceives the Son as *receiving* all from the Father by participation, and yet, because the Son's attributes are the Father's own (e.g. αὐτολόγος, αὐτοσοφία, αὐτοδύναμις, and so on), the Son possesses them as by a "non-participated possession."
12 Origen, *Comm. in Io.* 2.17, *GCS* IV: 54.
13 Origen, *Comm. in Io*. 2.18, *GCS* IV: 54, Heine 1989: 99. Here Origen proves similar to later Neoplatonists like Proclus, who also wavers over the exact relation between the second and highest levels of entities. Proclus, *El. theol*. prop. 114, denies that his henads (=the gods) "participate" the One, though they are hypostatically distinct from It (i.e. they are self-subsistent).
14 Balás 1975: 265, who provides Justinian's subordinationist-tinged rendering of *Princ*. 1.3.8.
15 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oratio* 31.14. Even Evagrius of Pontus (d. 399), whose legacy would later suffer from its Origenist leanings, makes sure to deny that the Son is either "like" or "unlike" the Father – for either implies a difference in quality, and that a difference in nature; cf. his *On the Faith* 9.
16 Basil the Great, *Ep.* 214, PG 32: 789a–b; so too at *Amb. Io*. 23.4.
17 See Zachhuber 2015 on the tensions in this Cappadocian "classical theory," especially in Gregory of Nyssa.
18 Harrison 1991: 59–60; cf. Ps.-Cyril, *De Sacrosancta Trinitate* 10, PG 77: 1144b, and John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa* 1.8.
19 Maximus, *Amb. Th*. 1.3, modified.
20 Maximus, *Ep*. 15, PG 91: 549c–d.
21 Maximus, *Amb*. *Th*. 1.3, modified.
22 Maximus, *Car*. 2.29, Sherwood 1955: 158.
23 Maximus, *Car*. 2.29, Sherwood 1955: 158.
24 Maximus, *Th. oec*. 2.1, Salés 2015: 106–107.
25 Maximus, *Q. Thal*. 8.
26 Cf. Maximus, *Amb*. *Io*. 10.39, *Amb*. *Io*. 67.10, *Q. Thal*. 28.5.
27 Maximus, *Or. dom*. 2, CCSG 23: 31–32.
28 Maximus, *Or*. *dom*. 4, CCSG 23: 40–41.
29 Maximus, *Or*. *dom*. 4, CCSG 23: 54.
30 Maximus, *Or*. *dom*. 4, CCSG 23: 52 (and 54): "[The Jewish error] does not see what God would be if he had no part with the Word and Spirit, nor how he would be God in having part with them as if they were accidents, by a participation close to that of rational beings subject to generation (μὴ συνορῶν ὅτι τίς θεός, τούτων μεμοιραμένος, ἢ πῶς θεός, μεθέξει παραπλησίως τοῖς ὑπὸ γένεσιν λογικοῖς, ὡς συμβεβηκότων, τούτων μεμοιραμένος). In Christ, as I have said, there is none of these things." Maximus here combines two kinds of "participation" into one error – the more vertical variety (Reason participated by rational beings) and the more horizontal (accidents participating in a subject). It is tempting to label these as (Neo)Platonic and Aristotelian, respectively.
31 Dionysius, *Ep*. 4 = *Amb*. *Th*. 5.1.
32 Maximus, *Amb*. *Th*. 4.8, 5.24, *passim*.
33 So Maximus, *Ep*. 15; PG 91: 552c, which says hypostatic identity establishes "mutual identity" (ἡ πρὸς ἄλληλα θεωρεῖται ταὐτότης) between different natures.
34 Maximus, *Amb*. *Th*. 5.11, modified.
35 On how the monenergist answer naturally arose from emphases in Neochalcedonian Christology itself (of which Maximus was partisan), see Uthemann 1997: 408.
36 Maximus, *Opusc*. 5, PG 91: 64a–65a, my translation.
37 An important inspiration for Maximus derives, of course, from the Christological use of the term at Gregory of Nazianzus, *Epistle* 101, SC 208: 48 (translation from Harrison 1991: 55, slightly modified): "Just as the natures are mixed, so also the names pass reciprocally (περιχωρουσῶν) into each other by the principle of natural co-affinity

(συμφυίας).” But see Stemmer 1983: 17: “Zu einem tragenden theologischen Terminus wird περιχωρεῖν erst bei Maximus Confessor im 7. Jahrhundert.”

38 Cf. Maximus, *Car.* 3.29, Ceresa-Gastaldo 156–158, where Maximus faults Greek philosophy precisely for conceiving creation as the variegated modal (qualitative) permutation of a single essence. Maximus’s critique is not just metaphysical but Christological.

39 A subtle point Maximus makes, for instance, before Pyrrhus, who was himself quite stunned by it: “PYRRHUS: There is nothing, then, which the natures and natural properties have in common [κοινόν]? MAXIMUS: Nothing, save only the hypostasis of these same natures. For, just in this way a hypostasis was the very same, unconfusedly, of these same natural properties (Ὥσπερ γὰρ ὑπόστασις ἦν ὁ αὐτὸς ἀσυγχύτως τῶν αὐτῶν φυσικῶν)”; see too *Amb. Th.* 4.8.

40 Wood 2018: 87–89.

41 It is not as if “the Son” or “Paul” or any person *qua* person bears natural qualities. A person (or hypostasis) as such possesses such qualities in whatever nature it bears, but cannot be reduced to them (*Amb*. *Io*. 17.5). If, then, a hypostasis is a positive reality that is not reducible to nature (its power, mode, properties, acts – in a word, its *logos*), then it need not impinge upon any aspect of nature when it instantiates it. So when Christ instantiates both created and uncreated natures in his very person, the concrete positivity he *is* need not in any way qualify either nature as such. Indeed the very fact that his hypostasis *is* both and yet diminishes neither is the concrete condition for the possibility of their total, real, undiminished preservation *as* identical to one another.

42 Dionysius, *Ep*. 4.

43 Maximus, *Amb*. *Th.* 5.17, slightly modified.

44 Maximus, *DP* 192, PG 91: 45d–348a: “τῷ ἀποῤῥήτῳ τρόπῳ τῆς εἰς ἀλλήλας τῶν Χριστοῦ φύσεων περιχωρήσεως προσφόρως.”

45 Maximus, *Amb*. *Th*. 5.14, slightly modified.

46 E.g. Stemmer 1983: 10–14.

47 Alexander of Aphrodisias, *De mixtione* 216.28–31: “τὴν γὰρ δύο ἢ καὶ πλειόνων τινῶν σωμάτων ὅλων ἀντιπαρέκτασιν ἀλλήλοις οὕτως, ὡς σώζειν ἕκαστον αὐτῶν ἐν τῇ μίξει τῇ τοιαύτῃ τήν τε οἰκείαν οὐσίαν καὶ τὰς ἐν αὐτῇ ποιότητας, λέγει κράσιν εἶναι μόνην τῶν μίξεων.”

48 Proclus, *In Parm*., Cousin 754, and *El. theol*. prop. 176 (on intellectual forms in Intellect), Dodds 1963: 154–155: “these ‘all interpenetrate all (φοιτᾷ πάντα διὰ πάντων),’ are “mutually implicit, interpenetrating one another in their entirety (ὁμοῦ ἐστι καὶ ἐν ἀλλήλοις, ὅλα δι’ ὅλων φοιτῶντα ἀδιαστάτως).” So Abramowski 1981: 70: “Dies ist also die ‘geziemende’ Weise, von Einheit auf der Ebene des Geistigen zu sprechen.”

49 Plato himself had registered this possibility as a marvel quite beyond participation’s reach; cf. *Parm*. 129b–c.

50 Gersh 1978: 27–44.

51 Plato, *Parm*. 131b-c (the problem of the Sail Cloth); Plotinus, *Enn*. VI.4–5 (basically a commentary on the *Parm*., on the One’s undiminished omnipresence to all things, even to body). Cf. the very useful introduction to Enn. VI.4–5, in Emilsson and Strange 2015: 17–44, and Lloyd 1998: 98–110.

52 Proclus, *El. theol*. prop. 2; Dodds 1963: 3.

53 Proclus, *El. theol*. prop. 9; Dodds 1963: 10–11: “Πᾶν τὸ αὔταρκες ἢ κατ’ οὐσίαν ἢ ἐνέργειαν κρεῖττόν ἐστι τοῦ μὴ αὐτάρκους ἀλλ’ εἰς ἄλλην οὐσίαν ἀνηρτημένου τὴν τῆς τελειότητος αἰτίαν.”

54 Proclus, *El. theol*. prop. 18, Dodds 1963: 20–21. So arises Proclus’s famous three moments of participation: τὸ ἀμέθεκτον (“the unparticipated,” the superior cause in its proper mode), τὸ μετεχόμενον (“the participated,” the whole presence of the superior cause in the effect according to the effect’s proper mode), τὸ μετέχον (“the participating,” the effect *qua* distinct/proceeded from what it has identical to its

superior cause); cf. Proclus, *El. theol*. props. 23–24, Dodds 1963: 26–29. Cf. too Gersh 1978: 150–151, for the necessary "vertical" and "horizontal" orders of existence (hypostases).

55 Proclus, *El. theol*. props. 75, 77, 78; cf. Iamblichus, *De myst*. I.18; Dionysius, *DN* 5.2. I refer here to an idea already developed in Plotinus, that vertical causation consists in the limitation of a higher, interior act by (or in the mode of) a lower power. See Gurtler 2009.

56 Iamblichus, *De myst*. I.19 Proclus, *El. theol*., props. 66–74.

57 Iamblichus, *De myst*. I.9, Clarke *et al*. 2003: 40–41: "εἰ γὰρ οὐδείς ἐστι λόγος οὐδὲ σχέσις συμμετρίας οὐδὲ οὐσίας τις κοινωνία οὐδὲ κατὰ δύναμιν ἢ ἐνέργειαν συμπλοκὴ πρὸς τὸ διακοσμοῦν τοῦ διακοσμουμένου. . . ."

58 Iamblichus, *De myst*. I.9, Clarke *et al*. 2003: 40–41: "Πρὸς μὲν γὰρ τὰ ὁμοφυῆ κατ' οὐσίαν ἢ δύναμιν ἢ καὶ ὁμοειδῆ πως ὄντα ἢ καὶ ὁμογενῆ δύναταί τις περίληψις ἢ διακράτησις ἐπινοεῖσθαι· ὅσα δ' ἐστὶν ἐξῃρημένα τοῖς ὅλοις παντελῶς, τίς ἂν ἐπὶ τούτων ἀντιπερίστασις ἢ δι' ὅλων διέξοδος ἢ μεριστὴ περιγραφὴ ἢ κατὰ τόπον περιοχὴ ἢ τι τῶν τοιούτων ἐπινοηθείη ποτ' ἂν ἐν δίκῃ;"

59 Dionysius, *DN* 2.6; Suchla 1990: 130.

60 So Garrigues 1982: 178–179.

61 Maximus, *Amb. Io*. 7.12.

62 Maximus, *Amb. Io.* 7. 22. See Thunberg 1995: 32–33, and Larchet 1996: 376–382.

63 Maximus, *Q. Thal*. 8.2, CCSG 7, 77, modified: "Ὁ κατ' οὐσίαν ἀληθῶς φῶς ὑπάρχων θεὸς ἐν τοῖς ἐν αὐτῷ διὰ τῶν ἀρετῶν περιπατοῦσίν ἐστιν, ἀληθῶς φῶς γενομένοις. Ὥσπερ οὖν τὸ κατὰ μέθεξιν φῶς, ὡς οἱ ἅγιοι πάντες διὰ φιλοθεΐαν ἐν τῷ κατ' οὐσίαν γίνονται φωτί, οὕτω τὸ κατ' οὐσίαν ἐν τῷ κατὰ μέθεξιν φωτὶ διὰ φιλανθρωπίαν γίνεται φῶς. Ἐὰν οὖν ἐσμεν κατὰ τὴν ἀρετὴν καὶ τὴν γνῶσιν ὡς ἐν φωτὶ τῷ θεῷ, καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ θεός, ὡς φῶς, ἐν φωτί ἐστιν ἐν ἡμῖν. Ὁ γὰρ φύσει φῶς ὁ θεός ἐν τῷ μιμήσει γίνεται φωτί, ὡς ἐν εἰκόνι ἀρχέτυπον."

64 Whole verse: "Ἐὰν δὲ ἐν τῷ φωτὶ περιπατῶμεν ὡς αὐτὸς ἐστιν ἐν τῷ φωτί, κοινωνίαν ἔχομεν μετ' ἀλλήλων καὶ τὸ αἷμα Ἰησοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ καθαρίζει ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάσης ἁμαρτίας" (1 John 1:7; *SBLGNT*).

65 Maximus, *Amb. Io*. 41.5; *Amb. Io*. 48.7; *Amb. Io*. 53.3; *Q. Thal*. 40.8.

66 Nor is it, say, an abbreviated version of Proclus's unparticipated-participable-participated triad (cf. *El. theol*. props. 23–24), for at least two reasons. The first and most obvious is that those technical terms do not appear in this passage. But second and more importantly, the logic does not either, since for Proclus the "unparticipated" term is precisely what is *not* in the participated because it is "prior to the many" (prop. 24, Dodds 1963: 28: "τὸ μέν ἐστιν ἓν πρὸ τῶν πολλῶν"). Here, though, "God Himself, as light, is in us who are light." It is true that we never become identical to the divine essence (cf. *infra*, n. 73), but the Christian God is not simply an essence. This God is rather an essence that is tri-hypostatic, so that the second hypostasis can himself be the non-natural mediator of the divine essence to those who are essentially not God. A better candidate for Maximus's potential use of Proclus's triad is *Th. oec*. 1.49, *PG* 90, 1101 (and really 1.48–50 as a whole), but see the careful qualifications of Greig 2017: 144–147, esp. the suggestion that Maximus's "eternal works," which are not self-subsistent like Proclus's participated terms, could "constitute a new ontological category for participated entities" (148, n. 26). In other words, the transition from the cause's transcendent power (as unparticipated) to the effect's immanent power (as participated by the participant) does not operate as Proclus's triad must, even if the triadic structure itself persists in Maximus. That makes sense if the transition – indeed the procession – comes through a divine hypostasis rather than a higher nature's modal limitation.

67 Gen 1:26–27. So Clement of Alexandria, *Pr.* 9.87; Evagrius, *Letter to Melania* 62, *Letter to Anatolius* 18.61; Diadochus of Photice, *De perfectione spirituali* 89, PG 65, 1203c–d (Latin).

68 Maximus, *Car*. 3.25; *Amb*. *Io*. 7.21; cf. *Q. Thal*. 53.3 and 6.
69 Maximus, *Amb*. *Io*. 21.15, PG 91: 1253d, my modifications and emphasis: "Τὸ δὲ Εὐαγγέλιον εἰκόνα κέκτηται τῶν ἀληθῶν . . . δι' ἧς τοὺς τὴν εὐαγγελικὴν ἑλομένους ζωὴν ἀκραιφνῆ καὶ ἀκίβδηλον διὰ τῆς τῶν ἐντολῶν ἀκριβοῦς ἐργασίας, τὴν τῶν μελλόντων ἀγαθῶν ὁμοιότητα κτησαμένους, ἑτοίμους ὁ Λόγος δι' ἐλπίδος καθίστησι τῇ παραδοχῇ τῆς τῶν ἀληθῶν ἀρχετυπίας ψυχωθῆναι καὶ γενέσθαι ζώας εἰκόνας Χριστοῦ, καὶ ταὐτὸν αὐτῷ μᾶλλον κατὰ τὴν χάριν ἢ ἀφομοίωμα, τυχὸν δὲ καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ Κύριος, εἰ μὴ φορτικὸς ὁ λόγος τισὶν εἶναι δοκεῖ."
70 Aristotle, *Pol.* 1453b11, for instance, which Ayroulet also correlates with the metaphysics of first and second *ousia* at *Cat*. 2a 11–23; so Ayroulet 2013: 42: "Dans le platonisme, les Idées archétypales existent en soi et précèdent dans l'existence les images qui en sont les copies, que ce soit dans le monde sensible ou dans l'art qui imite le sensible. Chez Aristote, au contraire, il semble que le prototype n'existe pas en tant que les mais seulement dans la μίμησις actualisée dans l'image." He says Aristotle's view implies "une simultanéité existentielle entre le modèle et l'image" (77), and applies this insight to Maximus later (148, 296).
71 Dionysius, *EH* 1.3, Heil and Ritter 1991: 66, ll.12–13, my translation: "ἡ δὲ θέωσις ἐστίν ἡ πρὸς θεὸν ὡς ἐφικτὸν ἀφομοίωσίς τε καὶ ἕνωσις"; cf. Proclus, *Theol. Plat*. VI.3.
72 Maximus, *Myst*. 24, CCSG 69, 58; *Q. Thal.* 59.8, CCSG 22, 53; *Q. Thal.* 25.5; *Amb*. *Io*. 41.5, *passim*.
73 Maximus, *Amb*. *Io*. 41.5, PG 91, 1308b–c, my emphasis: "Καὶ τέλος ἐπὶ πᾶσι τούτοις, καὶ κτιστὴν φύσιν τῇ ἀκτίστῳ δι' ἀγάπης ἑνώσας (ὢ τοῦ θαύματος τῆς περὶ ἡμᾶς τοῦ Θεοῦ φιλανθρωπίας) ἓν καὶ ταὐτὸν δείξειε κατὰ τὴν ἕξιν τῆς χάριτος, ὅλος ὅλῳ περιχωρήσας ὁλικῶς τῷ Θεῷ, καὶ γενόμενος πᾶν εἴ τί πέρ ἐστιν ὁ Θεός, χωρὶς τῆς κατ' οὐσίαν ταὐτότητος, καὶ ὅλον αὐτὸν ἀντιλαβὼν ἑαυτοῦ τὸν Θεόν. . . ."
74 Maximus, *Amb*. *Io*. 10.9, modified: "Φασὶ γὰρ ἀλλήλων εἶναι παραδείγματα τὸν Θεὸν καὶ τὸν ἄνθρωπον, καὶ τοσοῦτον τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ τὸν Θεὸν διὰ φιλανθρωπίαν ἀνθρωπίζεσθαι, ὅσον ὁ ἄνθρωπος ἑαυτὸν τῷ Θεῷ δι' ἀγάπης δυνηθεὶς ἀπεθέωσε, καὶ τοσοῦτον ὑπὸ Θεοῦ τὸν ἄνθρωπον κατὰ νοῦν ἁρπάζεσθαι πρὸς τὸ ἄγνωστον, ὅσον ὁ ἄνθρωπος τὸν ἀόρατον φύσει Θεὸν διὰ τῶν ἀρετῶν ἐφανέρωσεν."
75 Maximus, *Myst*. 24, CCSG 69, 59–60.

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Part IV

Ethics

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13 Apophaticism in the search for knowledge

Love as a key difference in Neoplatonic and Christian epistemology

E. Brown Dewhurst

In both Neoplatonic and Christian traditions, knowledge as a concept is tied up with cosmological commitments. The source of knowledge is located in the divine, of which we as humans can glimpse only a shadow. How we come by knowledge, and whether we even *can* come by such knowledge, and the degree to which the knowledge we have access to is true, are topics linked to how we relate to the divine, how we were created, and how we are sustained by such a divinity. Similarities in terminology as well as historical influences exchanged between Neoplatonic philosophy and (especially Byzantine) Christian theology, have resulted in contemporary scholarship comparing these traditions and seeing strong similarities also in their philosophies. In this chapter, I draw on Proclus (412–485CE) and St Maximus the Confessor (580–662CE). Maximus is a particularly good choice for this comparison, since he often draws on (Ps-)Dionysius the Areopagite, an interlocutor between Neoplatonism and Christianity. I argue that in the case of Proclus and Maximus however, that there are irreconcilable differences in their approaches to knowledge. The topic of knowledge in Maximus and Proclus has been dealt with most significantly by Demetrios Bathrellos, in a paper entitled "Neo-platonism and Maximus the Confessor on the Knowledge of God."[1] The aim of my chapter is to expand upon the differences pointed out by Bathrellos, and to demonstrate further important ways in which Maximus and Proclus diverge on the topic of knowledge. Whilst Maximus and Proclus are not representative of all Christian and Neoplatonic philosophies, the differences between them suggest that we should be cautious when drawing comparisons between Neoplatonic and Christian thought.

In this chapter I present Bathrellos' discussion of "knowing according to nature," especially in regard to the role of the will in Maximus, and then critique Bathrellos' silence on the topic of apophaticism in *theōsis*, an important aspect of Maximus' theology that further sets him apart from Proclus. I demonstrate how, for Maximus, the role of the will also brings the topic of knowledge into an anthropological and ethical domain that is tied up with relationality – something that takes Maximus further and further from Proclus' relationless understanding of knowledge and providence. Following an exposition of Bathrellos' position then, I devote the rest of the chapter to considering providence and apophaticism

as key places of divergence in Maximus and Proclus' treatment of knowledge. I conclude by suggesting that these thinkers have major differences in their metaphysical commitments, and that the problems encountered when even attempting to compare these philosophies ought to serve as a cautionary tale when comparing other Neoplatonic and Christian philosophers.

When talking about knowledge for both Maximus and Proclus, we are necessarily talking about the divine – the source of knowledge. And by talking about the source of knowledge, we come to be discussing the dissemination of knowledge and thus creation itself. Very quickly in both Maximus and Proclus, an enquiry into the topic of knowledge becomes concerned with cosmology and metaphysics. Questions about where knowledge comes from, how we can acquire it, and whether we are *able* to acquire it, necessarily touch on matters that concern how the universe is structured. How do creatures come to be? What is their relationship with the divine? Are they maintained by the divine? To what extent are creatures able to grasp and understand the infinity of the divine, and *is what we can know restricted by our nature?* If knowledge is restricted by nature, there also arises the question: *can I ever know or be known by a god?* These difficulties pose a threat to the providential ability of the divine, something Maximus and Proclus both wish to affirm the divine has. They also pose a problem for anyone who wishes to say that humans can become knowledgeable, and can know truths about the universe and the divine. This is likewise something that both Proclus and Maximus to an extent want to say is possible. They both wish to affirm that there is a way for rational creatures to lay hold of knowledge, even if that knowledge is limited by our natures.

To address these problems, I first discuss knowing according to nature. Both Maximus and Proclus are happy to say that a human can only know things in a human kind of way. Our nature determines how we can know the world around us. Following the work done by Bathrellos, I present some of the ways that Maximus begins to break apart this rigidity of knowing according to nature through the person of Christ. I thus start to identify the way that, although language concerning knowledge is similar in Maximus and Proclus, Maximus (and all Chalcedonian Christians) fundamentally break the logic of Neoplatonic thinking when it comes to nature.

I secondly consider providence. We find providence discussed by both Proclus and Maximus in relation to knowledge. For Proclus it is important, because whilst he wishes the divine to be untouched, unmoved, and unaffected, he still wishes to say that we are maintained by divine providence (πρόνοια). For both Maximus and Proclus, providence concerns the way that humans and the divine relate to one another, although we must use "relate" in the loosest of ways here to remain inclusive of the Neoplatonist position. To see knowledge "in action" as it were, we can look at providence – divine goodness experienced by lesser beings. I suggest that ultimately despite both Maximus and Proclus having a place for divine πρόνοια in their cosmologies, their understanding of this word is completely different. Maximus would not consider Proclus' understanding of providence to be providence, while Proclus would consider Maximus' understanding of providence to threaten divine simplicity.

Finally, I consider the place of apophaticism within Maximus' theology as a concept that disrupts the implicit goal of a search for knowledge. For Proclus, a human can only understand divinity from the perspective of an un-divine nature, so knowledge of the true nature of the divine will always remain mysterious and beyond human comprehension. By contrast, for Maximus, humans are granted the possibility to become like God by grace, transfiguring the limitations of knowledge according to nature, and consequently placing knowledge of the divine into a domain determined by relationship, free will, grace, and love. Apophaticism, in Maximus' understanding becomes not about what we cannot know about the divine, but the way in which we are invited to know more.

Thus within the course of this chapter, I argue that a fundamental difference between Proclus' and Maximus' approaches to knowledge concerns the person of Christ, who for Maximus transfigures the philosophical aim of knowledge-seeking into an invitation to a relationship of love with the divine.[2] The foundational role of Christ cannot be underestimated in Maximus' theology. Christ underpins all Maximus' understandings of nature, free will, relation with the divine, human purpose and potential, making his approach to knowledge not only incompatible but incomprehensible to Proclus' metaphysics.

Knowing according to nature

To understand Proclus' approach to knowledge, we must see its place within his broader metaphysical system. The claims Proclus makes of knowledge arise from the claims he wishes to make of the ultimate divinity in the cosmos, and these derive from a logical consideration about causation and existence in the universe. Proclus begins his *Elements of Theology* by explaining that the origin of all things must be greater than them all, not made up of multiple things, but simple and whole (prop. 6).[3] If the One is not simple, for Proclus, then it must be made up of components that preceded it (prop. 1). So the true defining principle of the original generative thing, must be that it is One (hence the name). Proclus tells us that the One (and all derived producing entities) produces things without moving and whilst remaining unchanged (prop. 26). This is because he wants to preserve the unchanging, timeless, simplicity of god(s), qualities that belong to something that is truly simple:

> For if it is measured by time, it must have a temporal existence or activity, and a past and a future which are mutually distinct; since if its past and its future be numerically identical, it is unaffected by the passage of time, which always contains a distinguishable "earlier" and "later." If, then, its past and its future are distinct, it is something which becomes and never is, but moves with the movement of the time which measures it (. . .).[4]

For Proclus, *timelessness* is a feature of being simple. This is because if one exists outside of time, then one cannot be measured by time. To be unmeasured by time, one's past and future must be identical – one is unchanging. And something that

is changed or diminished (or even *affected*) by producing lesser beings, is not something unchanging and outside time, and (for Proclus) is not divine. How any being understands the universe around them is limited by their capability to know – that is, by their natural faculties (prop. 122). The One knows things in a timeless and unchanging way, and in a way commensurate with who the One is by nature. I, likewise, know things in accordance with my human nature, which is subject to time and change. My comprehension of "timelessness" is one marked by and shaped by my experiences as a creature in time – I understand "timelessness" in a temporal way. Bathrellos points out that this means temporality is equally puzzling for the Neoplatonist deity – a god could only understand temporality in a timelessness kind of way – that is in a god-like kind of way.[5]

These attributes of the One and these restrictions in knowing according to nature are familiar to those reading Maximus' work. The attributes Proclus grants to the divine are already well established in the Christian tradition, with properties like unity, impassibility, timelessness, immutability having precedence in the Old Testament.[6] Maximus opens his *Two Hundred Chapters on Theology and Economy* with the words "God is one, without beginning, incomprehensible, possessing in totality the full power of being, fully excluding the notion of time and quality in that he is inaccessible to all and not discernible by any being on the basis of any natural representation."[7] Maximus also notes that, for creatures in time, God "is beginning as creator, middle as provider, and end as goal, for it is said, 'from him and through him and for him are all beings'."[8] Bathrellos identifies in Maximus a similar view to Proclus' in terms of natures determining the way we conceive of concepts.[9] He points out a passage where Maximus is explaining how one can talk of God "moving." In the passage, Maximus notes that in actuality, movement only appears to be movement to us as creatures, who are moving in ourselves: "If, hearing of movement, you wonder how the Godhead that is beyond infinity is moved, understand that what happens is happening to us and not to the Godhead."[10] Creatures thus understand God in a human kind of way, using terms like "movement" to understand the divine, when really God is beyond the concept of movement. We also find in Maximus an affirmation that "it is not possible, as has been demonstrated, that He who is beyond all beings should know beings in a manner derived from beings."[11] God does not know intelligible things intelligibly, or sensible things sensibly, since this would imply that His knowledge is confined to creaturely natures and dimensions. At first glance then, we have two approaches to knowledge that bear some resemblance. We have a recognition that what we can know is limited by our nature, and that our conceptions of that which is other than us is shaped by our nature. The divine nature discussed by Proclus and Maximus clearly also has similarities, both in attributes and in conceiving of the divine as the origin, culmination, source and aim of all knowledge, and without whom nothing exists. Likewise both affirm that, for a human, truly understanding a divine nature is beyond our capacity, since we cannot grasp eternal concepts with a finite nature.

The first distinction Bathrellos points out is that for Maximus, we do not only know God according to our nature, but also according to our will.[12] Our

relationship with the divine is more than that of causer and caused. We have a relationship with the divine because we choose to be known, and because God in turn chooses to know us. Proclus follows a reading of Plato via Plotinus,[13] where creation is not consciously willed[14] into existence but instead exists and is sustained through radiated (ἐπιλάμπω) goodness (prop. 122). Providence, as we shall come to later, is an unconscious radiation of goodness primarily originating from the divine Henads, divinities subsidiary to, but partaking of, the One. The created world order rather *proceeds* (πρόειμι (prop. 34), προέρχομαι (prop. 21)) from the Nous, which is produced by intellective Henads (prop. 163), and thus subsidiary to the One and the Henads.[15] Proclus also talks about the Nous producing (παράγω) others from its own being. These words (πρόειμι, προέρχομαι, παράγω) in and of themselves are relatively neutral in terms of what they reveal about how creation has come about and whether creation has been consciously willed into existence. However, we also find an instance of Proclus discussing the Nous as irradiating (ἐλλάμπω) its gifts upon creation, implying that the act of creation is also not consciously willed (prop. 57). It is possible that this last example from prop. 57 is not representative of all the Nous's activity, since it comes from a passage discussing the special way that inanimate, soul-less creation participates in and receives gifts from the Nous. We know, however, that, insofar as the Nous partakes of the divine, and all divine things are unrelated and unchanged by productive acts, the Nous is removed from particular concerns associated with the products of its creation. We have no evidence, at least, to suggest that the created order came about through a conscious act of will. It would seem then that any knowledge we as created beings have of anything divine, occurs by merit of being creatures that have derivative existence, rather than through any conscious will on the part of created or creating deity.

For Maximus, creation exists because it is freely willed into being by God. Creation is not necessary, but contingent on the will of God. And God, having willed creation into being, knows creation as God's own will, in both its universality and particularity. Maximus notes:

> If God created all things by His will – which no one denies – and if it is always pious and correct to say that God knows His own will, and that He willingly made each of the things that He made, it follows that God knows beings as His own wills, for He willingly brought them into being. Based on these considerations, I think that Scripture, consistent with these same principles, says to Moses: *I know you above all;* and concerning some others: *The Lord knows those who are His own*. To still others it says: *I know you not*. In each case, the voluntary decision to move either in accord with the will and logos of God or against it prepared each person to hear the divine voice.[16]

Firstly, we can see that Maximus describes God's knowledge of us as something very personal. God "says to Moses: '*I know you above all*'," meaning God has specific knowledge of Moses the man. God has knowledge not just of Moses in his capacity as a creature or as a human, but a precise knowledge of this

particular person. If we think back to the Proclus' understanding of knowledge as restricted to nature, knowledge of a specific person is an unthinkable thing for any divinity to have. The One, the Henads, Being, Life, and the Nous,[17] are above fragmentated knowledge of particulars since "every god has an undivided knowledge of things divided" (prop. 124). Divine beings are transcendent, know the universe in terms of unity, and do not seem concerned about who or what a specific Moses is. Even before considering *how* a divinity knows creation and vice versa, we can see that the very fact a Christian God has this particular knowledge at all sets the Christian tradition apart from Proclus' system of thought.

Maximus also explains something important here both about how God knows us and about how we know God. God created by and according to His will, and thus knows created things because they resemble His will. We have been created with our own free will however, and thus when we turn from what God has willed for us, we no longer resemble what it was intended we be. We, through our free will, choose to be unrecognisable and unknowable to God. God's will is thus not just involved in the initial creative act, but is a perpetual trajectory intended for us – one which we can choose to align our own will to, or turn away from. God's willed intentions for us, or *logoi*, are thus how God knows His creation. Bathrellos contrasts this understanding of the *logoi* as products of God's will, to Proclus' understanding:

> It is noteworthy that, in contradistinction to neo-platonism, for Maximus the *logoi* are not the unwilled products of divine thought, but products of the divine will. For Maximus, all this depends on God's freedom. Man, the world, and all its *logoi* exist only because God wants them to exist. The *logoi* do not belong to the essence of God but to his will. Besides, the word "προορισμοί"[18] (predeterminations) gives to the identity of the *logoi* an eschatological orientation. God creates freely and his creation has a purpose.[19]

The purposeful and eschatological element of the *logoi* becomes especially important when we later consider providence as an expression of relationship. We are known within a perpetual providential relationship that has trajectory and purpose.[20] We are invited to join our will to God's and thus to choose this providential end. When creation acts in accordance with these *logoi* – that is, when it follows God's will toward an end of perfect consummation in God, we are known by God according to His will. Thus when a creature follows God's will and is united to Him in *theōsis*, God has complete knowledge of a creature. He not only knows it as something other than Himself, i.e. by nature, but also as that which has willingly received Him and has become like the *logos* intended for it, i.e. by will.

Therefore, God knows us both by nature and according to how we choose to be known. Will and freedom are very important for Maximus' understanding of knowledge, not just for God but also for creation. Humans are given a choice to be known by God. They are made according to his will, and can choose to act in accordance with that will. If they do not, like in Luke 13:27, they are not *known* by God. They are unrecognisable to Him, since they have rejected their being in Him.[21] Therefore

we can struggle to live in accordance with our *logos* – God's will for us – and in that process *grow* to know Him. Whilst we live in this life, our capabilities are limited by our natures – we can grow to have a partial understanding of God's wisdom, Maximus explains, but when we reach our end in God, we will come face to face with truth and all mirrors and hidden meanings will pass away.[22] In *theōsis*, we will know all there is to know about other creatures so that, "there will remain for us only the enjoyment of participation in the infinite and incomprehensible knowledge of God," and that "we shall, in time to come, *know even as we are known*," which is to say in a divine-like way.[23] Bathrellos is keen to emphasise that if we live in accordance with our *logoi*, then we can reach God, and come to know him "*in a manner that pertains not to man but to God himself*."[24] Even when discussing knowledge according to nature, Maximus brings us back to the centrality of freedom of choice in humanity and Christ's bringing together divine and human nature within one person. The limitations of knowledge according to nature have been overcome in the incarnation when God takes on human nature, and, when Christ is crucified and resurrected, human nature too is offered the opportunity to be deified in Him and to know in a divine-like way. Despite being limitless, out of love and by His will, God became human, emptied Himself, and knows created things according to *human nature* and not just divine nature. Nature itself is altered by the relationship between created and divine and the roll of free will within this relationship. Human nature falls due to human will. Divine nature and human nature are brought together in one person, an impossibility that occurs through divine will. Human nature has been transfigured and sanctified and if humans will it and align themselves to divine will, they may partake in this transfigured nature. Nature is not a limiting factor, but descriptive of particulars who are changing in their relationship to God.[25] Maximus explains that, as creatures made by God, what is *natural* is to follow our *logos*, which is the divine will that we reach our divine goal. It is in both our original and restored human nature in Christ to be joined to God and to become divine by grace.[26] Thus, even knowing according to nature is a matter concerning freedom and will, and has always had the capacity to be transfigured. It is in the capability of human nature not *just* to know according to human nature, but also to know according to divine nature by grace.

Bathrellos gives us a good starting point from which to consider knowledge according to Maximus and Proclus. He misses one element in Maximus' thought however that will become especially important later when indicating further differences between Maximus and Proclus. When citing Maximus' claim that in *theōsis*, humans will know things "*in a manner that pertains not to man but to God himself*," Bathrellos leaves unclarified the degree of apophaticism that exists even in *theōsis*. Bathrellos moves on from a discussion of creaturely knowing according to the divine nature without clarifying that for Maximus there is always an apophatic element to creaturely relationship with God, even in *theōsis*. In his *Mystagogia*, Maximus writes:

> And what is admirable is how the enduring reality finds its end once it is included or comes to its term in the truth, that is, in God. For God is the truth

> toward which the mind moves continuously and enduringly, and it can never cease its movement since it does not find any discontinuity (διάστημα) there. For the wonderful grandeur of God's infinity is without quantity or parts, and completely without dimension, and offers no grip to take hold of it and to know what is in its essence.[27]

In a passage more explicitly on the final state to come, Maximus also writes, "For it is simply not possible that those who once come to be in God should reach satiety and be drawn away by wanton desire."[28] Even in *theōsis*, the eschatological moment that creatures are invited to share in the divine nature occurs through grace, and the preserved distinction between created and Creator persists. To have knowledge of God then is simultaneously something possible for humans, and something that will always remain outside the full grasp of our knowledge. In a paper exploring the nuances of this paradox, Paul Blowers emphasises that it is important for Maximus that there is a fullness, a reality, and a completion in *theōsis* and in our experience and knowledge of God. There is however never an exhaustion in this process: "Maximus wants to show that the final 'rest' is real, and yet in the overall context of deification, relative: the stasis is not an utter cessation or termination, but a stabilisation, a 'sabbath,' and a transformation."[29] The dynamism of rest in God and the complexity of this perpetual relationship is expressed in *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* as "ἀεικίνητος στάσις" – ever-moving rest and "στάσιμος ταὐτοκινησία" – stationary movement.[30] When creatures are in full communion with God they arrive in a rest that is also moving. In his analysis of this section of *Ad Thalassium*, Sotiris Mitralexis points out that far from being puzzled by such an idea as movement and rest being simultaneous, we should instead consider this the best possible way to use human language when contemplating a God who is beyond and outside time and yet possesses all motion and stillness.[31] Even creatures who have become god by grace are distinct from God's essence,[32] and therefore continue to grow in knowledge of Him whilst being in Him. It is important that we understand this paradox in Maximus' thought. Through Christ and the opportunity to live anew in reconstructed human nature, we may receive the gift of *theōsis*. It is possible for us to come to know God in a divine-like way, since in *theōsis* we are invited to participate in divine nature by grace. Maximus is always very clear however, that we never become God in essence, and that our knowledge of God is never satiated and complete. We align ourselves with God's will by choosing to make space within ourselves for the divine, but sanctification is always a divine act of grace and the domain of the Holy Spirit.[33] Our knowledge of God in this way concerns participation that is dependent on grace – an invitation that can be rejected by human will. Participation in the Neoplatonic One, by contrast, arises by necessity of our nature, which partakes in forms, that partake in the Nous that partakes of certain Henads, and eventually by extension, the One, which is the ultimate unity. The One is at the pinnacle of the universe, whilst for Maximus, God is utterly removed from any pyramidical structure of the cosmos, and is knowable only by condescension of His will. Nature and the place of will therefore have very different operations

within the theologies of Maximus and Proclus and in their understanding of knowledge.

Providence

Earlier we touched on the unwilled nature of creation for Proclus – i.e. creation as a product of the Nous and the good nature of the divine,[34] rather than as a product of will. This has repercussions also for continued maintenance of creation, or providence, which in turn plays a fundamental part in how we relate to the divine, and know the divine. In prop. 122, Proclus writes:

> For without declension from the unity which is their substance the gods have filled all things with their power; and whatsoever is able to participate them enjoys such good things as it is capable of receiving according to the limitations of its own nature, whilst they radiate good to all existents in virtue of their very being, or rather their priority to Being. For being pure excellences, by their very being they furnish to all things good without stint; they make no calculated apportionment, but the participants receive according to their deserts what the gods bestow according to their own substance. Thus in exercising providence they assume no relation to those for whom they provide, since it is in virtue of being what they are that they make all things good, and what acts in virtue of its being acts without relation (for relation is a qualification of its being, and therefore contrary to its nature). Nor, again, does their separateness annul their providence; for it would at the same time annul – a thing unlawful even to suggest – their substance, whose distinctive character is goodness. For it is the mark of goodness to bestow on all that can receive, and the highest is not that which has the form of goodness but that which does good.[35]

Providence for Proclus bears so little resemblance to a Christian understanding of providence that we can only correlate the word πρόνοια in both with great caution. The impersonal nature of providence for Proclus means that his understanding does not share Christian connotations of care. For Proclus, providence should not really even be considered to be directed towards lesser beings. When Proclus says above that "in exercising providence they (divine beings) assume no relation to those for whom they provide, since it is in virtue of being what they are that they make all things good, and what acts in virtue of its being acts without relation," he identifies entering into relationship with finite beings as disrupting the unchangeable and unitary nature of the divine.[36] Providence is depicted as something almost happenstance – a divinity does not mean to be good to us, it just radiates (ἐπιλάμπω) goodness because that's in its nature as a good being. Such a being neither wills nor does not will divine maintenance upon the cosmic order. Maintenance occurs because a divinity (specifically here, a Henad) acts according to its good nature. A divinity never enters into a personal relationship with that which it maintains or that which derives properties from it. Providence for Proclus is a maintenance of lower beings that occurs by nature rather than by will.

We get a picture of both the origin of creation and providential maintenance that is relationless, and necessarily occurs as a by-product rather than because it is willingly intended. Providence does not change the divine, it is not *for* the receiver, it is just a part of who the divine is, that they emit these radiations of goodness. Proclus clarifies that these deities are still providential (at least in the instance of the Henads), because they are ultimately good. He says that to do good is to bestow goodness on others. Again however, we run into difficulties in terminological comparison. The act of providence described above shares little with the way goodness is depicted in the New Testament. Maximus asks his reader to follow Christ's example of goodness – Christ's example is hard, full of sacrifices, forgiveness, giving even when one has nothing, loving the stranger, showing mercy – deeply *personal* interactions.[37] By contrast, Proclus' understanding of providence focuses on preserving the transcendence of divinity. For Proclus, goodness radiates from the divine Henads, occurring without cost to them, without them being affected by this gift, without them entering into relationship with who they give to, without them even intending to give. Providence and goodness itself become terms that take on a completely different meaning for Proclus and Maximus, and yet are important to both their respective understandings of knowledge of the divine, thus further alienating Proclus and Maximus' understandings of knowledge from one another.

This, coupled with the limitations of knowledge according to nature, makes for a strangely isolated universe in Proclus' reading. If a divine being knows things according to its own nature, and inferior beings know things according to their inferior nature, and no relationality exists between the two, do they really know anything about each other? A god knows beings like you and me, who are many and change, in a unitary and unchanging way. A god knows temporal things in a timeless way. And a god does not receive any knowledge from inferior beings themselves (prop. 124). In other words, a god knows about me without ever looking at me, without communicating with me, without comprehension of how I change in time, without even understanding that human nature has specific instances – a person. It sounds to me as if this god does not really know me at all. How could they, when my nature as a being affected by time, change, contingency, and individuality shapes who I am in a personal capacity? For Proclus, any divine nature is beyond knowability and is transcendent. For Maximus, it is extremely important that God is not purely transcendent because we have the person of Christ who brings divine and human nature together inside Himself. Radek Chlup argues that for Proclus there is an immanence to the One, and that the One is not purely remote and transcendent, since if this were so, "we would not see any connections but only distinctions. As a result we would not be able to comprehend any single entity – for once we tried, it would dissolve into an infinite number of parts and aspects."[38] However, we have already established that for Proclus, we can only know things according to our nature. Arguably then, there is a sense in which we *cannot* truly comprehend any single entity, especially one whose nature is so utterly different to our own. We have in Proclus a picture of the cosmos entwined in procession and reversion, where lesser beings

participate in those above them, so that even the One is in some sense present in the lowest of all beings.[39] As we have seen from a discussion of providence however, all of this interrelation is not strictly speaking "relation." Providence, as primarily the domain of the Henads, may link all subsequent entities together, but these activities occur in an impersonal and unconscious manner. In seeking to preserve the absolute transcendence of the all that is divine, Proclus introduces an apophatic element to his philosophy that to a certain extent is insurmountable. Ultimately, we are bound by our natures, and while for Proclus providence links these natures to one another, and makes lesser beings dependent on higher ones, the knowledge we can have of the divine cannot exceed the limitations of our inferior human natures.

Comparatively, we read in Maximus:

> The soul would never be able to reach out toward the knowledge of God if God did not allow himself to be touched by it through condescension and by raising it up to him. Indeed, the human mind as such would not have the strength to raise itself to apprehend any divine illumination did not God himself draw it up, as far as is possible for the human mind to be drawn, and illumine it with divine brightness.[40]

Knowledge and providence for Maximus must be about relation between the Creator and created through grace.[41] We know what we know because it is gifted to us. God has brought us voluntarily into existence and gifted us all knowledge we have. In thinking about that enormous chasm between created and Uncreated, Maximus writes:

> In considering the loftiness and divine infinity we should not despair that God's love for man cannot reach all the way to us from the heights. Neither when we ponder the infinite depth of our fall in sin should we disbelieve that a resurrection of dead virtue can take place in us. For God can accomplish both these things: He can come down and illuminate our mind through knowledge, and likewise he can raise up virtue in us once again and exalt us to himself through the works of justification.[42]

The ascetic life humans strive for is ultimately brought to fruition by divine grace and providence. The human search for knowledge is a perpetual reciprocal relationship. How is the divine not "changed" by this intimate interaction with humans for Maximus? If a god wilfully illuminates the humans that seek them, then surely such a god is undergoing change and threatening their simplicity? This brings us to a third consideration on apophaticism.

Apophaticism

According to Maximus, we are able to both personally know God and yet never fully know God. Proclus wishes to affirm something similar – namely that we all

participate (indirectly) in the One, but that the One remains transcendent. The idea of *personally* knowing a god though, undermines the transcendence of the divine for Proclus. The idea that Christ could be both human and divine, co-essential with human nature and with divine nature, breaks apart the logic of simplicity and causation upon which Proclus' metaphysics is founded. The task of the word "nature" is nullified if one somehow has both a human one of them and a divine one of them. How is this paradox resolved for Maximus, who after all has many similar commitments to Proclus when it comes to a distinction between created and divine, to the limitation of knowledge according to nature, and to the ultimate unknowability of the divine? How can we resolve the paradox that says we are able to both personally know God and yet never fully know Him?

The first thing to consider is the extent to which this is really paradoxical at all. Even when talking of a fellow human being, we might say we know someone well, but to claim to have full knowledge of another person transforms our discussion from one about relationship into one about acquisition. It implies that knowledge with mystery is deficient knowledge, rather than the enigma of another person, who, because of their freedom and choices might never be fully comprehended by us. Before we even consider the problems of an unknowable God in apophatic thought, a lot of our difficulties can be assuaged if we move a discussion of knowledge away from acquisition and possession. What does it mean to know someone? Does space for one's relationship to grow imply a failure on the part of one who seeks knowledge? Has the person who does not have exhaustive knowledge of God-in-God's essence failed in their search for knowledge? Can they be said not to know God, if there is still more to be known? Already the hard and fast division between knowledge and the absence of knowledge is being eroded. In a Christian context, we are talking about persons, about freedom, about will, about the desire to be known, and to characterise any of those things as somehow in tension with complete knowledge seems to be absurd. When we talk about knowing someone according to will, we are talking about choice, and people revealing themselves to one another. It means we are discussing a relationship and not just pure natural observation. In the absence of things we know about someone is the freedom we give to another to reveal knowledge of themselves to us – to be known to us. Those who turn away from God are those who have refused to be known by him, and have refused to live in accord with God's will. The absence of knowledge in this instance is a testament to God's allowing us the freedom to reject God – a freedom that also allows us to choose to love God. Without this space to choose not to be known, we cannot truly choose to love. The absence of God's full knowledge of us is an expression of God's withdrawal to allow that which is other than Godself to exist and persist and to freely make choices. The will plays a hugely important role in apophaticism for Maximus. It is not just what cannot be said, but about personal relation and invitation. Despite both utilising apophaticism in their philosophies, the kind of apophaticisms Maximus and Proclus are talking about are very different. Even if we take Proclus' apophaticism as doorway into positive assertions about the divine, even if we concede that there is an immanence to the way he describes

the One in all things, the fact that for Maximus our relationship with the divine is about *will* makes his understanding of knowledge completely different to Proclus'. I have thus far characterised this distinction in Maximus as being about *will*, but what it is really about is love. The will of God to create and to maintain, God willingly limiting Himself and sacrificing Himself, all of these are about love, of which free will is an essential component.

The reason the Christian God is not pulled apart by this paradox in the way that the divine is for Proclus, is to do with an important difference in the way that Proclus and Maximus approach their respective philosophy and theology. Proclus' One must above all be one, and that oneness is linked to simplicity and to the causation of the universe. If this oneness is jeopardised, then so too is the position of the One as first thing. Proclus' metaphysics is truthful to the extent to which its internal consistency is logically possible – the first thing is the simplest thing, otherwise there would be prerequisite things that make it up. For Maximus, what we know of the divine begins not with a logical statement about causation but with revelation. The oneness of the Christian God is derived from Scripture, meaning that when Scripture points to a threeness as well as a oneness in God, the divinity of such a God is not called into question as it would be for Proclus if said of the One. *How* we come to have knowledge of the divine is thus also very different for Maximus and Proclus. For Maximus, whilst we can use our human rational faculties to contemplate and puzzle over what has been revealed, our human faculties in themselves are limited, never fully comprehending or encompassing the nature of the divine. Whilst we see a similar discussion of the transcendent nature of divinity for Proclus, his understanding of simplicity leaves little space for the idea that divine oneness could be something beyond complete human comprehension. The One itself for Proclus is evidently transcendent and mysterious and beyond positive descriptive concepts, but if we were for example to posit that the One could be simultaneously three in an understanding of unity that is beyond human faculty, then the logic underpinning Proclus' *Elements of Theology* begins to fall apart. The source of what we know of the One and of the structure of the universe for Proclus seems to rely on the (self-evident) logic of causation that he demonstrates in *The Elements of Theology*. The existence on the One is posited on the very premise that there must be a perfect, even simpler unity beyond that of the Nous.[43] So despite the oneness of the One being incomprehensible to humans, Proclus is committed to it being the single reducible fact we can say of the One (and of the universe itself, since this is the first truth from which Proclus reasons all others). Whilst for Maximus it is also the case that we can deepen knowledge of God through reason,[44] observation of the natural world, and how it is ordered,[45] this knowledge is informed first and foremost by the life of Christ and that which is revealed in His economy. Thus for Maximus, knowledge of God begins not with statements about causation, but that there was Christ, who was born, lived and died, and who revealed in his life, death, and resurrection, God. Likewise, we can look at Christ, who tells us he comes to fulfil the Old Testament – so God is truly one, unlimited, eternal, and all the other Old Testament attributes a Neoplatonist like Proclus is

more comfortable with, but we are told this by Christ, who is the embodiment of divine limitation, one of three persons of the Godhead, who died. These are paradoxes that cannot be resolved if one's first principle is absolute simplicity. They are, however, more reconcilable, if one's first principle is a divinely revealed concept of love. The oneness and threeness of the Christian God can be understood as love itself, and the limitation of the unlimitable can be understood as an ultimate expression of love, but again, even in this understanding there is something enigmatic. The tension between what we know about God and what still remains mysterious is where it becomes useful to talk of apophaticism. As Louth notes in a paper on Maximus and apophaticism:

> The movement between apophatic and kataphatic is not a matter of a dialectic between two kinds of human logic in speaking of God; rather, it is a movement between God's own hidden life and his engagement with his creation, between God's essence and his energies, to use a later formulation.[46]

Earlier I mentioned that seeking knowledge of God should be characterised as deepening a relationship, rather than engaging in encyclopaedic research. What Louth characterises nicely in this distinction between apophatic and kataphatic theologies, is that apophatic is that which is still hidden, whilst kataphatic is that which has been revealed. Louth also parallels this with a distinction between essence and energies, a later hard and fast distinction promoted by the Christian theologian Gregory Palamas (1296–1359CE),[47] the precedents of which we can find in Maximus. God in God's essence, as Maximus is always keen to observe, will always be a mystery, but there is still a true meeting and a true knowing of God when we partake of his energies.

Thus, Maximus agrees with Proclus – of course natures define what we can know, that after all is what a nature is. But he also points out that what we think we see of human nature now, may not be what it is intended to be, and the divine nature cannot be circumscribed by human thought, even when it comes to what it means to be one. Nature is a far less rigid concept for Maximus than it appears to be for Proclus. For Maximus, natures can be transformative – human nature has fallen and can be healed – divine nature can be paradoxically brought into communion with human nature in the person of Christ. The theological starting point Maximus takes by beginning with Christ's revelation of love, places the search for knowledge of God in a completely different paradigm to that of Proclus' philosophy. The way that Proclus draws knowledge of the One from out of a logical philosophy of how the universe must have come to be, gives him principles and commitments on a meta-philosophical level that are irreconcilable to Maximus' theology. For Maximus, the parameters of human reasoning cannot circumscribe God in God's essence since, "the wonderful grandeur of God's infinity is without quantity or parts, and completely without dimension, and offers no grip to take hold of it and to know what is in its essence."[48] Thus, knowledge of God becomes about the distinctions Louth mentioned between transcendent and economic, between apophatic and kataphatic, between essence and energies. How we

seek God becomes about working to receive what is revealed, both in this life and more fully in *theōsis*:

> The knowledge of beings includes naturally, in view of demonstration, their own principles, which naturally circumscribe them in a definition. But with God, only his existence can be believed through the principles in beings. He gives to those who are devout a proper faith and confession which are clearer than any demonstration. For faith is a true knowledge from undemonstrated principles, since it is the substance of realities, which are beyond intelligence and reason.[49]

Conclusion

To conclude, Maximus, and Proclus both hold that how we know things is delineated by our nature. The divine knows things in a divine way, and the created knows things in a created way. Proclus believes providence to emanate from the divine Henads without having been explicitly willed, and we can arguably see a similar unconscious willing in the act of creation from the Nous. For Maximus, it is precisely this willing of creation into being that characterises the relationship between created and divine and thus what it means to have knowledge. For Maximus, the will and how we choose to be known transforms natures,[50] even though what humanity receives in divine likeness is given as a gift by the Spirit through grace, and not by essence. This means that there will always be enigma to the divine, and that knowledge will never be ended by a full-stop, and is instead an invitation to continue to grow in a relationship with that which is eternal. There is still a reality to this knowledge however. At the heart of the later essence-energies debate that Palamas fought for was a concern about real encounter with a God who still remains unknowable. Likewise here, as we saw in Blowers evaluation of *epektasis*, there must be a real rest – a real sense in which what is given in *theōsis* is full and genuine, whilst also affirming that the infinity of God never satiates the human desire.[51]

What we know and what we can know are rooted in how we relate to the source of knowledge and the source of our existence. Knowledge of God for Maximus is an invitation to a way of life and an eschatological promise. Providence is the divine willingly illuminating creation, and creation willingly receiving illumination. By contrast, for Proclus, providence is not relational but occurs by necessity of nature. The created order is sustained by divine goodness, but this goodness looks very different to any goodness that Maximus wishes to talk about. The immanence of the divine in Proclus' metaphysics occurs through participation by similarity in natures. What we know of the divine is always confined to nature for Proclus, and does not concern personal relation and will as it does for Maximus. This is an enormous difference in not only epistemology in Maximus and Proclus, but all associated areas of theology and philosophy touched on in this chapter. For Maximus, knowledge as a subject is a doorway into discussing what is intended for humans, the ascetic life, and the promise of *theōsis*. For Proclus, knowledge

as what we can and cannot know belongs to a discussion of natures and causation – it is much more a look into the past at how we came to be and the limitations of our nature. To talk of knowledge for Maximus, is to talk inescapably of relationship, love, freedom, and will – God is a who and can be known personally. For Proclus, these are ultimately all concepts that are incompatible with the oneness, simplicity, impassibility, and immovability of the One. Not only then is there a fundamental incompatibility between the philosophical positions of Proclus and Maximus on knowledge, but the very nature of the validity of such a comparison is called into question when their terminology and conceptions of the divine itself are so radically different.

Notes

1 Bathrellos 2013.
2 For a discussion of this in relation to Dionysius, see Pavlos' chapter on *Theurgy in Dionysius the Areopagite*, and Vasilakis' *On the Meaning of Hierarchy in Dionysius the Areopagite*, in this volume.
3 Proclus, *El. theol*. prop. 6. Hereafter the proposition number is used directly in the text.
4 Proclus, *El. theol.* prop. 50; Dodds 1963: 49.
5 Bathrellos 2013: 119.
6 E.g. Ps 90:2; Ps 102:27; Deut 6:4; Deut 33:27; Num 23:19; Isa 40:28.
7 Maximus, *Th. oec*. I.1, PG 90: 1084a; Berthold 1985: 129. Cf. also a passage very similar to Proclus' in identifying multiplicity as contrary to the simplicity of God (*Th. oec.* I.83, PG 90: 1118a–c). It is worth noting however, that a partner chapter opens the second century, clearly intended to mirror I.1, in which Maximus describes God as "entirely monad an entirely triad" and gives an extended section on the unity of the Trinity: *Th. oec*. II.1, PG 90: 1124d–1125c.
8 Maximus, *Th. oec*. I.10, PG 90: 1085d–1088a; Berthold 1985: 130.
9 Bathrellos 2013: 123–124.
10 Maximus, *Amb*. *Th*. 1.3, PG 91: 1036c; Louth 1996: 170.
11 Maximus, *Amb*. *Io*. 7.24, PG 91: 1085b; Constas 2014: 109. Although following this part of the sentence, Maximus goes on to say that God knows creatures according to His will, which, as we will come on to, is very different to Proclus' position.
12 Bathrellos 2013: 124.
13 Dodds 1963: 264. Dodds points to the passages: Plato, *Leg.* 903e, and Plotinus, *Enn*. IV.3.13 and 24.
14 When talking here and elsewhere about any deity "not willing" for Proclus, I mean that the activity has not been consciously willed, and that it occurs by necessity of nature. I do not mean that the activity is occurring *against* the will of the divine.
15 Tollefsen argues that for Proclus, although the cosmos has a first cause, it does not have a beginning in time, and thus the cosmos should not strictly be considered to have a beginning at all. See Tollefsen's chapter *Proclus, Philoponus, and Maximus: The Paradigm of the World and Temporal Beginning*, in this volume (p. 101).
16 Maximus, *Amb*. *Io*. 7.24, PG 91: 1085b–c; Constas 2014: 109.
17 Proclus tells us in prop. 167 that the Nous knows itself as one, and not as the multiple intelligences that it causes.
18 Maximus' use (*Amb. Io.* 7.24, PG 91: 1085a) of the word προορισμοί (predeterminations), comes from Dionysius, *DN* V.8, Suchla 1990: 188.8; PG 3: 824c.
19 Bathrellos 2013: 122–123.
20 God willing creation into being has providential importance not only for the reasons discussed here and below, but also because each creature is willed into being at their apportioned time, in accordance with the *logoi* intended for them. On this, see

Tollefsen's chapter *Proclus, Philoponus, and Maximus: The Paradigm of the World and Temporal Beginning,* in this volume (p. 105).

21 Bathrellos 2013: 123.
22 Maximus, *Th. oec*. I.70, PG 90: 1110a; cf. 1 Cor 13:12. Here Maximus is likely building on the eschatological passage of Dionysius, *DN* I.4, Suchla 1990: 114.7–115.5; PG 3: 592c.
23 Maximus, *Amb*. *Io*. 7.12–15, PG 91: 1077a–d; Constas 2014: 93.
24 Maximus, *Amb*. *Io*. 7.25, PG 91: 1088a; Bathrellos 2013: 124.
25 See Mateiescu's chapter *The Doctrine of Immanent Realism in Maximus the Confessor*, in this volume.
26 Maximus, *Amb*. *Io*. 7.29, PG 91: 1089c.
27 Maximus, *Myst*. ch. 5; Berthold 1985: 192.
28 Maximus, *Amb*. *Io*. 7.28, PG 91: 1089b; Constas 2014: 115. See also the passage quoted earlier from Maximus, *Amb*. *Io*. 7.12–14, PG 91: 1077a–b.
29 Blowers 1992: 162.
30 Maximus, *Q. Thal*., CCSG 22: 65.544–547.
31 Mitralexis 2014: 149.
32 Maximus *Amb*. *Io*. 7.9, PG 91: 1073b.
33 Maximus, *Myst*. ch. 23 and 24; for a discussion on the tension between acquiring divine virtue by free will and by grace in Maximus, see my doctoral thesis "Chapter 4: From Physical to Ethical in the Cosmos of St Maximus" (Brown Dewhurst 2017: 129–164).
34 It is the created order that proceeds from the Nous that we are in particular interested in, but we can to a certain extent refer to the One in this context also, since the One is the origin of all lesser deities, and does not "create" these by an act of will, but by its own good nature. Cf. Chlup 2012: 62–63.
35 Proclus, *El. theol*. prop. 122; Dodds 1963: 109.
36 Whilst this proposition specifically concerns the Henads, which are clearly distinct from the One (props. 21 and 116), Proclus in prop. 122 is defending "all that is divine" (Πᾶν τὸ θεῖον) from relationality with the created – a concern that applies both to the Henads and the One. Proclus also talks about the providence of the One in his *De decem dubitationibus circa providentiam* (Boese 1960: 4.4–25.)
37 Eg. See Maximus, *Car.* I.23–32, PG 90: 965a–968a.
38 Chlup 2012: 50.
39 Eg. Proclus, *El. theol.* prop. 8; Cf. Chlup 2012: 50–51.
40 Maximus, *Th. oec*. I.31, PG 90: 1093d–1096a; Berthold 1985: 134.
41 In passages like *Th. oec.* I.7, PG 90: 1085b we can see Maximus using a similar language to Proclus and calling God above all relation. However, this should be understood as referring to a difference between the unknowable divine nature and created nature. Relation with God becomes possible through Christ and the Spirit. Hence how we are able to participate in God at all when he is imparticipable. As I will come on to later, kataphatic and apophatic statements are not contradictory for Maximus, but necessary for describing the complexity of the relationship between God and His creation.
42 Maximus, *Th. oec*. II.36, PG 90: 1098a–b; Berthold 1985: 155.
43 According to Chlup, the innovation in thinking of the One in this way was a crucial step made by Plotinus, since prior to him, most Platonists were happy to talk of the Nous as the highest reality. Chlup 2012: 49.
44 Both in terms of referring to our reasoning faculties, and in terms of coming to know the *logoi*.
45 Natural contemplation is one of the stages of ascetic prayer Maximus adopts from Evagrios; it involves contemplating the *logoi* of creatures which are God's will for all things within all things. Cf. Louth 1996: 35–37.
46 Louth 1997: 42.

47 Gregory Palamas, *The Triads*. The distinction between essence and energies allows for an understanding of God-in-Godself as beyond all comprehension (essence), whilst allowing for real encounter with God through His activity in the world (energies). God's energies truly are Him and thus to participate in them is to participate in God (since natures are known by their activity), but they do not circumscribe God's essence. God's essence is transcendent, whilst His energies are His imminent presence in the world.
48 Maximus, *Myst*. ch. 5; Berthold 1985: 192.
49 Maximus, *Th. oec*. I.9, PG 90: 1085c–d; Berthold 1985: 130.
50 Maximus, *Amb*. *Io*. 7.10–11, PG 91: 1076a–b.
51 Blowers 1992: 158–159.

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14 The origin of passions in Neoplatonic and early Christian thought

Porphyry of Tyre and Evagrius Ponticus

Adrian Pirtea

This chapter[1] explores the possible connections between the Neoplatonic philosopher Porphyry of Tyre (c.234–305), the famous disciple of Plotinus (c.204/5–270), and the Christian ascetic author Evagrius Ponticus (c.345–399).[2] Although for most Christians in Late Antiquity Porphyry's name was more or less synonymous with his sweeping criticism of Christian doctrine in the treatise *Adversus Christianos*, some Christian authors nevertheless read and assimilated some of the philosopher's teachings. The wide and long-lasting reception of Porphyry's *Eisagoge*, used as the basic textbook for Aristotelian logic in Greek, Latin, Syriac, Armenian, Arabic, and Hebrew, is the most obvious example of Porphyry's influence on Christian (as well as Jewish and Islamic) thought.

Less studied is the possible influence of Porphyry (and, implicitly, of his teacher Plotinus) on Christian ethics and asceticism, specifically on the Early Christian understanding of passions (πάθη), vice, and freedom from passion (ἀπάθεια). Among the Christian authors of Late Antiquity, no other writer has provided more subtle insights into the nature of passion than Evagrius, who lived the last fifteen years of his life as a hermit in the Egyptian desert. Evagrius' relationship with Greek philosophy is very complex and has led some earlier scholars even to question the distinctly Christian nature of his thought as a whole.[3] However, with numerous recent studies having convincingly established the Trinitarian, Christological, and Biblical foundations of Evagrius' teaching,[4] it is perhaps time to reconsider Evagrius' relationship to Greek philosophy from a more balanced and non-polemical perspective.

The main question to be addressed here is how Porphyry and Evagrius explained the formation of passions in the human soul, and whether or not Evagrius' theories on the subject were in any way influenced by Porphyry. By analyzing the way in which the two authors trace back the origin of passion to perception and the experience of pleasure and pain, I will argue that the two approaches are indeed very similar and that a direct line from Porphyry's to Evagrius' thought is very likely. Moreover, because their theories of passion are deeply embedded in Platonic psychology and integrate elements of Aristotelian ethics and epistemology, they are clearly to be separated from competing Stoic theories of passions.

Although the Evagrian concept of ἀπάθεια has been the subject of several studies in the last decades,[5] the Stoic origin of Evagrius' idea has very seldom been questioned. In fact, already his contemporary Hieronymus criticised Evagrius for his concept of *impassibilitas*, which Hieronymus disparagingly claimed to imply that one could become "either as a rock or as God" (*vel saxum vel Deus*).[6] The context of Hieronymus' letter makes it clear that he interpreted Evagrius' ἀπάθεια in a purely Stoic key. Interestingly, this tendency of reading exclusively the Stoic understanding of *impassibilitas* into the Evagrian concept has also been prevalent in modern scholarship.[7]

The approach attempted here takes a different course: I begin with the premise that a correct interpretation of the term ἀπάθεια in Evagrius first presupposes an adequate understanding of its two main components, i.e. "passion" (πάθος) and its negation (the *alpha privativum*). If the first component ("passion") can convincingly be shown to hail from Platonic and Aristotelian psychology and ethics (via Porphyry and Plotinus), it would make sense to interpret Evagrius' ideal of "detachment from passion" on the same Platonic-Aristotelian foundation and along the same lines with Porphyry's concept. If the resemblance between Porphyry and Evagrius proves to be systematic in nature, this would call for a thorough reconsideration of the relationship between Evagrius and Late Antique philosophy as a whole.

Porphyry and Evagrius on the "life of the intellect"

If the attainment of true happiness consists in the contemplation and knowledge of God, then any object or any activity diverting a person's attention from that one goal is to be avoided at all costs. For Porphyry and Evagrius, who would both agree that contemplation (θεωρία) and intellection (νόησις) are the highest and most enjoyable activities for human beings,[8] the main obstacles are not external, but are to be found within the human soul: they are the *passions* (πάθη) and their chronic condition, *vice* (κακία). Detachment from passion and vice is thus absolutely necessary if one desires to ascend to God, yet this is easier said than done, since the human soul has an innate proclivity both towards the Divine and towards the sensible world and its pleasures. This inclination or "capacity" (δύναμις) towards the sensible is described by Porphyry as follows:

> [T1] For we were, and we still are, intellectual beings, pure from all perception and unreason. But we became involved with sensibles because of our incapacity for eternal union with the intelligible and our capacity (δύναμις), so to call it, for what is here. *For when the soul does not remain in the intelligible, all the capacities which are active through perception and the body germinate*; they are like the effects of impoverishment in the earth, which often, though sown with wheat-seed, produces tares. The cause is a depravity of the soul, which does not destroy its own essence by producing unreason, but still, through unreason, is linked to mortality and dragged from its own to what is alien.[9]

Just as his master Plotinus, Porphyry defines the sensible world as a place "down here" (ἐνταῦθα) and as an "alien realm" (τὸ ἀλλότριον). It is a place of exile for the human soul, whose true home is the Intelligible. Yet at the same time, because of its failure to remain in eternal union with the Intelligible, the soul is drawn towards the world of the senses.[10] It is in this same context that Porphyry defines the true aim of the philosopher as the "joining with one's true self, nothing else. And one's real self is the intellect (νοῦς), so the end (τέλος) is to *live in accordance with the intellect* (τὸ ζῆν κατὰ νοῦν)."[11] The attainment of this goal – Porphyry continues – is not achieved through argumentative speech or learning (λόγοι καὶ μαθήματα) alone, but through "changing our present life for another" (ζωὴν δεῖ ἀντὶ ζωῆς ἀλλάξασθαι). This change in essence consists in the separation from perceptible things and the "detachment from perception (αἴσθησις) and imagination (φαντασία) and the unreason (ἀλογία) which follows on these and the passions (πάθη) associated with it."[12] This kind of ascetic detachment from the sensible world leads to the acquisition of virtue (ἀρετή), which in turn enables the constant engagement with the Intelligible.

Even though Evagrius develops his ethics and his ascetical system within a Christian and Trinitarian framework, his ideas and arguments do betray the influence of Neoplatonism and, as I will argue, his acquaintance with Porphyry's works in particular. To begin with, as was pointed out recently by Paul Géhin,[13] Evagrius closely echoes Porphyry's statement about living in accordance with the intellect (ζῆν κατὰ νοῦν)[14] when he admonishes his readers:

> [T2] Keep your eyes fixed in your prayer and, denying your flesh and soul (τὴν σάρκα καὶ τὴν ψυχήν), *live according to the intellect* (κατὰ νοῦν ζῆθι).[15]

The common source of both expressions is, of course, Aristotle's "life of the intellect" (ὁ κατὰ τὸν νοῦν βίος),[16] yet the literal agreement between T2 and the expression τὸ ζῆν κατὰ νοῦν in *De abst*., I.29.4 strongly suggests Evagrius' direct borrowing from Porphyry. We have already seen that Porphyry's ideal to live according to the intellect naturally presupposes that the intellect is one's true self. The idea that the νοῦς is the core of a human person is also present in Evagrius and can be gleaned from many passages in his writings. In *Cogit*. 17, for instance, irascibility, and desire (θυμὸς καὶ ἐπιθυμία), i.e. the "lower soul," are said to have been joined by God to *the human being* (ἄνθρωπος), which in the context can only refer to the rational faculty or the intellect.[17] Moreover, the requirement in T2 to deny one's flesh and soul in order to live the life of the intellect coincides with Porphyry's understanding of detachment from the body and the senses. In another striking parallel between the two authors,[18] Porphyry and Evagrius call ascetic detachment and the pursuit of virtue a kind of "death" and "flight from the body" (with a clear reference to Socrates' statements in Plato's *Phaedo*):

> [T3] What nature has bound together, that nature may loose, and what soul has bound together, that it itself may loose; but nature has bound body in soul, while soul has bound itself in body. It is nature, therefore, that releases body

> from soul, but soul that releases itself from body. Death is of two sorts: the one is the generally recognized one involving the loosing of the body from the soul; the other is that of the philosophers, involving the soul loosing itself from the body; and it is not always necessary that either should follow upon the other.[19]

> [T4] Separating body from soul belongs solely to the one who joined them together; but separating soul from body belongs also to one who longs for virtue. Our fathers call anachōrēsis a meditation on death and a flight from the body.[20]

It could be argued that such ideas about the pre-eminence of the intelligible over the sensible and the need to detach oneself from the body were philosophical *loci communi* in Late Antiquity, and this is certainly true. However, the agreement between Porphyry and Evagrius proves to be more systematic in nature. Both authors understand the "separation of soul from body" to lead to a state of "freedom from passions" (ἀπάθεια). Furthermore, Evagrius and Porphyry develop their theories concerning the psychological origins of passions on the basis of similar epistemological and ethical premises. Drawing on Platonic and Aristotelian ideas about cognition and the nature of pleasure and pain, Evagrius, and Porphyry (following Plotinus)[21] consider the ultimate source of passions to lie in the very act of perceiving. Thus, as will become clear later on, for Porphyry and Evagrius "freedom from passions" is essentially synonymous with "freedom from sense-perception," to the extent this is possible for embodied souls. Moreover, because of its Platonic and Aristotelian foundations, the Evagrian and Porphyrian concept of ἀπάθεια turns out to be quite different from the Stoic understanding of impassibility (see below, Concluding Remarks).

Perception and the origin of passions: Porphyry

How do passions come about in the human soul and how exactly is perception connected to their emergence? I will begin with Porphyry's view on the matter. In continuation of his statements about the soul's involvement with the sensible world in *De abst*. I.30 and the need for detachment (*De abst*. I.31–32), Porphyry engages in a lengthy discussion concerning passions and their psychological origin. Starting out with an allusion to a passage in Plato's *Laws* (636d7–e3), where the Athenian Stranger calls pleasure and pain "two springs" (δύο πηγαί), Porphyry explains:

> [T5] Here "two springs well up" to bind the soul: filled with them, as if with lethal potions, it falls into oblivion of its own objects of contemplation. *These springs are pleasure and pain*. *Perception provides them, and so does apprehension following perception, and the phantasies, and opinions and memories which accompany perceptions*; the passions aroused by these, and

> unreason in its totality made gross by them, pull down the soul and divert it from its own love for that which is. So we should be detached from them, as far as we can. *Detachment comes by avoiding the passions that go with perception and those that go with unreason*. *Perceptions come from things seen or heard or tasted or smelled or touched. Perception is like the mother-city of the alien colony of passions in ourselves*. See how much there is that inflames the passions that flows into us with each perception, perhaps from the sight of contests of horses and athletes or of dissolute dancing, perhaps from looking at the female; such sights are the bait of unreason, and bring it under their control with all kinds of additional snares.[22]

Pleasure (ἡδονή) and pain (λύπη) are said by Porphyry to be directly responsible for the imprisonment of the soul and its forgetfulness of the intelligible realm. Porphyry then states that the cause of pleasure and pain is "*perception* and the *apprehension* that follows perception" (αἴσθησις καὶ ἡ κατὰ τὴν αἴσθησιν ἀντίληψις), i.e. cognition via the five senses. The differentiation between αἴσθησις and ἀντίληψις reflects Porphyry's statements in his *Commentary to Ptolemy's Harmonics*, where apprehension (ἀντίληψις) is the first stage in the cognitive process after perception, whose role is to "take up the forms detached from matter" and to "introduce" them into the soul. In the soul, they are received by the "opinative assumption" (δοξαστικὴ ὑπόληψις) and by the imaginative faculty (φαντασία), before a concept (ἔννοια) can be stored in memory and actual knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) and the "accurate vision" (ὄψις ἀκριβής) of the intellect can occur.[23]

Whereas the passage in the *Commentary* is primarily concerned with epistemology, in T5 Porphyry uses the same stages of the cognitive process in order to explain the appearance of passions: Perception, apprehension, opinion (cf. δοξαστικὴ ὑπόληψις in the *Commentary*), imagination, and memory (cf. ἔννοια in the *Commentary*) are said to provide the soul not only with cognitive content, but also with an experience of pleasure and/or pain. To take up one of Porphyry's examples, it is not the simple cognition of an external object or situation (e.g. the "dissolute dancers" at the end of T5) that arouses the observer's desire, but the pleasure one experiences in the act of seeing them.

But how are cognition (e.g. via perception) and pleasure/pain exactly connected? I take the background to this close connection posited by Porphyry to be the Aristotelian idea that perception (αἴσθησις), like intellection (νόησις, νοεῖν), are acts (ἐνέργειαι) issuing from the soul's power of discernment (δύναμις κριτική).[24] In the case of perception, this act of discernment is directed towards sensible qualities. Pleasure (ἡδονή) in turn is defined by Aristotle in Book X of the *Nicomachean Ethics* as "a whole" (ὅλον τι),[25] which always accompanies an activity (ἐνέργεια) of the soul and perfects it "as a supervening perfection" (ὡς ἐπιγιγνόμενόν τι τέλος).[26] It thus follows that any cognitive activity will be followed naturally by a pleasure specific to it and that this pleasure is most intense when the act is directed towards the "most excellent object" (τὸ κράτιστον, 1174b19). Now, since perception is the lowest form of human cognition, the supervening pleasure will also necessarily be the lowest, especially when

compared to the pleasure of intellection. In fact, because of its connection to the body, sensual pleasure is prone to be seconded by pain or discontent. Moreover, when the objects of knowledge or the activity one engages in are improper in any way, the pleasures that follow are "alien" (ἀλλότριαι, 1175b16, 22) and therefore not real pleasures at all.

Returning to Porphyry, it thus becomes clear why, in light of his aim to achieve the "life of the intellect," the soul's engagement with sensual pleasures must be avoided *in toto*. The sensible realm and the pleasures that accompany perception only disperse the attention of the soul and dim its power to turn to the Intelligible. Put differently, sensual pleasure and the desire arising from it are the means used by perception to take hold of the soul. Porphyry likens this process to an "alien colonisation" and enumerates the intermediary stages leading from perception to the formation of fully fledged passions (πάθη): These stages are phantasies, opinions, and memory (φαντασίαι τε καὶ δόξαι καὶ μνῆμαι). This series again mirrors the stages of cognition in the *Commentary on Ptolemy's Harmonics*, but it also recalls Plato's *Philebus*, where memory (μνήμη) and opinion (δόξα) are treated precisely in the context of pain and pleasure (see esp. *Phileb*. 38a–39c). Similarly, here, Porphyry's focus is not the knowledge produced by opinion, memory, and imagination, but the experience of pleasure connected to them.

According to *Sent*. 15, memory (μνήμη) is "the projection (προβολή) anew of items on which one has been exercised previously."[27] By making present to the mind past experiences of pleasure or pain, memory, and imagination can therefore be the source of desire for sensual objects, even if those objects are not immediately present.

A more complex category of pleasures and pains emerges when *opinion* comes into play. Based on previous sensual experiences and memories, humans can develop certain opinions (whether true or false) about what is good and desirable for themselves. For example, when a person believes that the fulfilment of a certain pleasure will become impossible at a certain point in the future, he/she can become anxious or angry. Again, if somebody opines that they have been treated unjustly and are distressed as a consequence, they might seek revenge in order to restore "justice" (and might find pleasure in planning their revenge). The list can easily be extended. Porphyry summarises:

> [T6] From these [i.e. perceptions] come memories and phantasies and opinions all assembled: they arouse a swarm of passions, fears, desires, anger, love, seduction, grief, envy, anxiety, illness, and leave [the soul] full of such passions.[28]

Porphyry's likely source here is, once again, Plato. In *Phileb*. 47e–48a Socrates gives a similar list of passions, namely "anger, fear, yearning, mourning, love, jealousy, envy," which are said to belong "to the soul only" and also said to involve "pleasures mixed with pain."[29] In contrast to the pleasures that involve the body and its needs, this series of passions is linked to the soul

alone, more specifically to the "irascible part," since the passions mentioned involve *opinion* and the feeling of self-esteem (the "ego"), which are characteristic of the *thumos*.

This indicates that Porphyry's understanding of human passions is intimately linked to his adoption of the Platonic model of a tripartite soul: The appetitive part, by its very nature, is closely associated with the body, with perception and with the direct and immediate pleasures deriving from them. The irascible part is responsible for more complex passions (e.g. anger, envy, etc.), since in addition to perception, imagination, and memory, their emergence also involves specific *opinions* about what is good and desirable for oneself.[30] In conclusion, Porphyry's account on the origin of passions integrates Aristotle's analysis of pleasure and its relation to cognition within the Platonic theory of the soul. The result is a complex causal chain connecting perception and passion via a series of intermediary cognitive processes (pleasure, memory, imagination, opinion).

Perception and the origin of passions: Evagrius

Turning to Evagrius, we find not only an endorsement of the Platonic tripartition of the soul and an analogous distinction between the passions (πάθη) of the appetitive and the irascible parts, but also a similar explanation concerning the origin of passions in the act of perceiving. In fact, the denial of "flesh" and "soul" Evagrius speaks about in *Or*. 110 (T2) is to be understood precisely against this background. The ascetic denial of body/flesh and soul does not imply that they are *per se* evil, or that only the intellect is redeemable (as in some varieties of Gnosticism). Rather, the meaning of Evagrius' statement becomes clear if we consider the following passages in the treatises *Ad Eulogium* and *Practicus*:

> [T7] Indeed you cannot otherwise extinguish the passions until you mingle with the *flesh* ascetic labours to overcome them; nor indeed, *the passions of the soul* until you rain the fruits of charity down upon your heart. *The passions of the body take their origin from the natural appetites of the flesh, against which abstinence is effective; the passions of the soul have their conception from the appetites of the soul, against which charity is effective*.[31]

> [T8] The passions of the soul have their origin in human beings; those of the body have their origin in the body. Abstinence cuts away the passions of the body; spiritual love cuts away those of the soul.[32]

These passages suggest that Evagrius, like Porphyry, developed his theory of passions within the framework of Plato's teachings, which presupposes a division between a rational, an irascible, and an appetitive part in the human soul. Consequently, the distinction between the passions of the body (σῶμα), or flesh (σάρξ), and those of the soul in T7 and T8 is equivalent to saying that some passions are linked to the appetitive part (τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν), while others are characteristic of the irascible part (τὸ θυμικόν). The passions of the former are more closely linked

to the body and to perception, while the passions of the latter belong to the soul only and are generally linked to our interaction with other human beings. It also follows that the remedy for the passions of the two lower parts of the soul are the virtues corresponding to each part, i.e. abstinence for the appetitive part, and charity for the irascible part.

With regard to the ultimate cause of passions as such, Evagrius traces their origin back to *perception* (αἴσθησις):

> [T9] Whatever a person loves he desires above all; and what he desires he struggles to attain. *Now desire* (ἐπιθυμία) *is the source of every pleasure* (ἡδονή)*, and sensation* (αἴσθησις) *gives birth to desire*. For that which has no part in sensation is also free from passion.[33]

In the first sentence, Evagrius describes the inner disposition of somebody who entertains a passionate desire for something. Here again, the Platonic background is transparent: it is the ἐπιθυμητικόν that *loves* (ἐρᾶν) and *longs for* (ἐφίεναι) something, while the θυμός can *struggle* (ἀγωνίζεσθαι) to attain it. Implicit in T7–9 is also the fact that the "lower" soul's ability to know, enjoy, and desire things can overtake a person who is not in possession of the virtues of abstinence and charity. In the second part of the text, Evagrius establishes a close connection between perception, pleasure, and desire, which he affirms also in other instances. In *Pract*. 38 the passions are said to be "naturally set in motion by perceptions" (ὑπὸ τῶν αἰσθήσεων πέφυκε κινεῖσθαι τὰ πάθη), but also that they can be impeded by the virtues of love and abstinence. Passions are also joined together with *striving* (ὄρεξις δὲ παντὶ πάθει συνέζευκται).[34] It is therefore not unexpected when Evagrius, in close correspondence to Porphyry's "detachment from perception" (αἰσθήσεως ἀφίστασθαι, *De abst*. I.31.1), equates "freedom from perception" with "freedom from passion."

But what is the exact function of perception for Evagrius and how are desire and pleasure connected to it? Like Porphyry, Evagrius follows Plato and Aristotle in defining perception and intellection as acts of discernment, or discrimination (κρίσις).[35] Moreover, Evagrius' use of the verb ἀντιλαμβάνεσθαι to describe the activity of perception closely corresponds to Porphyry's term ἀντίληψις and to the terminology of the late ancient Peripatetics (Alexander of Aphrodisias, Themistius).[36] Since according to Aristotle pleasure is a "supervening perfection" upon the very act of perception, it stands to reason that Evagrius would understand the bond between αἴσθησις and ἡδονή in T9 in the same way. However, Evagrius inserts "desire" (ἐπιθυμία) between the two terms, which would appear to disrupt the immediate connection between them posited by Aristotle and Porphyry. A plausible solution to this would be to argue that Evagrius' statement ("desire is the source of every pleasure") does not refer to ἡδονή in the technical sense just mentioned, but rather in a more general sense, as in: "taking pleasure in fulfilling one's desire." In this case, there would still need to be an implicit "hedonic moment" attached to the act of perception which causes desires to arise. Any desire for an object of the senses is not possible without previous knowledge

of that object and without a feeling of pleasure attached to the act of knowing it (a pleasure one desires to relive).

After establishing that perception, desire, and pleasure are the first causes of passions, Evagrius turns to the later stages in their formation: Although we do not find a comprehensive list of these stages as in Porphyry, several passages in Evagrius' work make it clear that he too believed memory, imagination, and opinion to be essential components in the formation of passions. Because the human soul can retain memories (μνῆμαι) of past sensible experiences and summon these memories at a later time with the aid of imagination (φαντασία), desires do not immediately disappear once somebody avoids direct sense-perception of a certain object. As Evagrius knew very well from his own ascetical experience, even desert monks, who had no opportunity to perceive around them anything pleasurable or desirable to the senses, would still be troubled by the passionate memories (ἐμπαθεῖς μνῆμαι) and passionate phantasies (ἐμπαθεῖς φαντασίαι, cf. *Disc*. 56) of past things. This is explained by Evagrius as follows:

> [T10] When we have impassioned memories of certain things*, it is because we previously entertained the objects with passion*; and in turn, when we entertain objects with passion, we will have the impassioned memories associated with these.[37]

To have passionate memories and phantasies means that together with the act of perceiving a certain object and the feeling of pleasure or pain following it, a person also develops a desire which is "contrary to nature" (παρὰ φύσιν), i.e. which goes against the natural function of the irascible and appetitive parts of the soul. This is expressed in an important passage from Evagrius' *De malignis cogitationibus*, where the role of memories, phantasies, and opinions in the formation of complex passions such as anger or envy is further explored:

> [T11] All the demonic thoughts introduce into the soul mental representations of sensible objects; impressed by these, the mind carries about within itself the forms of those objects; and then, from the object in question, the mind recognizes the demon which made its approach. For example, *if the face of a person who has done me harm or dishonoured me should arise in my mind, this will be proof of the approach of the thought of resentment. In turn, if the remembrance of riches or esteem should arise, it is clearly from the object that the one afflicting us will be recognized*. And similarly, in the case of the other thoughts you will discover from the object the one who is present and making the suggestions. But I am not saying that all memories of such objects come from the demons – for the mind itself, when it is moved by a human agent, naturally brings forth images of things that exist – *but only those memories that bring on irascibility or concupiscibility contrary to nature*. Because of the disturbance in these two powers, the mind commits adultery and violence in its intellect, and is incapable of receiving the image of God who imposed his law on it, if it is true that radiance manifests itself to

> the ruling faculty at the time of prayer only with the suppression of all mental representations associated with objects.[38]

It is significant that Evagrius gives the example of a person who has caused oneself dishonor and thus awakens resentment (μνησικακία). As in the case of Plato's and Porphyry's "passions of the soul" (see above), the type of passion Evagrius describes here involves a specific *opinion* ("someone has dishonoured me") and is therefore characteristic of the irascible part of the soul. However, Evagrius goes even further and argues that the mental image of the person responsible for one's dishonour can be summoned by way of demonic activity.

At this point Evagrius introduces an important distinction between "thoughts" (λογισμοί) and "passions" as such (πάθη), which requires a more detailed discussion, since it raises the question of Evagrius' philosophical sources. According to Richard Sorabji, the difference between "thought" and "passion" in Evagrius is essentially a Christianised version of the Stoic differentiation between "pre-passions" (προπάθεια) or "first movements" (*primus motus*) on one hand, and fully-fledged passions on the other. This idea is present in Stoic authors such as Epictetus and Seneca and was adopted with some modifications by Alexandrian Christian theologians like Origen and Didymus the Blind.[39] While προπάθεια is certainly important for Origen and Didymus and could have played a role in Evagrius' thought as well (although the term never appears as such in his works), I think it is misleading to interpret the Evagrian λογισμοί in terms of Epictetus' pre-passions or of Seneca's "first movements."

Here is why: Seneca posits two distinct moments in the formation of passions (or: emotions, *passiones*). According to him, "first movements" are not yet passions, because they are mere reactions of the body to an external stimulus and therefore essentially *pre-cognitive* in nature: Seneca likens them to the body's shivering when splashed with cold water or to other similar occurrences (cf. Seneca, *De ira*, II.2.1). There is still no judgment or opinion attached to such reactions. Only when reason consents to the representation of that external stimulus and forms an opinion about it, can one speak about passions/emotions proper.[40]

On the contrary, for Evagrius the λογισμοί are *from the very beginning* cognitive (even if to a limited extent): Evagrius describes them in T11 as already fully formed *concepts* of sensible objects (νοήματα αἰσθητῶν πραγμάτων) when they enter the soul and stir a desire within it. Such concepts (out of which memories, phantasies, addictions, etc. can arise) can only be formed based on previous cognitive acts directed towards sensible things (perception, intellection). While in Stoicism cognition is only possible on the level of *ratio*, Evagrius' adoption of the Platonic tripartite soul allows him to posit a lower form of cognition in the lower, "irrational" soul. Thus, for Evagrius "irrational" (ἄλογος) is *not* synonymous with pre-cognitive. As in Plato and Porphyry, the passionate part of the soul in Evagrius is able to *know, feel*, and *desire* on its own. The desires of the passionate part of the soul are only irrational in the sense that they can be *contrary to* (yet not devoid of) reason.[41] It is in this framework that Evagrius can speak of temptation

as "rising through the passionate part of the soul and darkening the intellect," or of the intellect "assenting" to temptation.[42]

It is also important to note that demonic thoughts or suggestions are said to appeal to *memories* of past (sensible) experiences, and this in so far as the memories themselves are "passionate" (cf. T10). It is not by chance that Evagrius speaks in T11 of the *remembrance* (ὑπόμνησις) of riches, esteem, etc. A person's passionate memories likewise derive from previous cognitive acts involving pleasure/pain and desire. Therefore, according to Evagrius, the individual's response to demonic suggestions (λογισμοί) is by no means pre-cognitive or comparable to a mere bodily reaction; it rather depends on that person's previous knowledge, the habits and weaknesses he/she developed as a consequence of past experiences, etc.

This also explains why different persons are prone to different passions and/or vices. As Kathleen Gibbons argued in a recent article,[43] Evagrius concedes that there is a high degree of "subjectivity" in the formation of passions. The propensity of an individual towards one passion or another depends on his/her personal history. Gibbons' argument is made even more compelling when one looks at the Aristotelian and Porphyrian background of Evagrius' discussion of passions: for Aristotle, taking pleasure in the right things is something to be educated and practised over time, the aim being the formation of the *habitus* of virtue.[44] On the contrary, repeated engagement with the wrong pleasures leads to the formation of a bad character. For Porphyry, the truly philosophic virtues can only develop through a sustained engagement with intelligible pleasures (i.e. contemplation) and by rejecting the sensible. Finally, in Evagrius' Christian terminology, the rejection of sensible pleasures and the achievement of contemplation can only be accomplished through ascetic practice (πρακτική).

An outlook: the degrees of virtue and freedom from passion

We have seen above that Porphyry deems it necessary to "change one's life for another" (*De abst.* I.29.6) in order to ascend to divine contemplation. Similarly, in his *Kephalaia Gnostika* (Evagrius, *KG* II.4) Evagrius speaks of four "changes" or "transformations" with regard to the human soul (syr. *šūḥlāpē*), the first being the passage from vice (syr. *bīšūtā*, κακία) to virtue (syr. *myattrūtā*, ἀρετή). Both authors agree that such a "change" cannot be achieved through "learning and argumentation" alone, but that ascetic practice and the right actions are absolutely necessary for the soul's purification.[45] In light of structural similarities presented above between Porphyry's and Evagrius' understanding of passion, it would be worthwhile to compare their views on the nature of virtue. Although I cannot offer a full discussion of this complex topic here, I would like to draw attention to one common aspect found in Porphyry (following Plotinus) and in Evagrius: the idea of *degrees of virtue*. This topic is not only highly relevant in itself, but it also contributes to a better understanding of another crucial concept in Porphyry and Evagrius: "freedom from passion" or "impassibility" (ἀπάθεια).

In *Sent*. 32 Porphyry systematises Plotinus' views on virtues, as expressed in *Enn*. I.2. In this well-known text Plotinus attempted to reconcile the civic virtues described by Plato in the *Republic* with the soul's "purifications" (καθάρσεις) mentioned in *Phaedo* 69bc. The result is the creation of a scale of virtues with four levels, in which the Platonic four cardinal virtues (wisdom, courage, abstinence, justice) reappear at each level under different aspects.[46]

The virtues of the first level according to Plotinus and Porphyry are "civic" and regulate proper conduct within society. On the second level are the "purifications", which characterise the philosopher who retreats from society in order to pursue the contemplative life. Unlike the civic virtues, which aim at the moderation of the passions, the purifications are meant to eliminate them altogether and aid the philosopher in abandoning the realm of sensibles. The virtues of the third level correspond to the state of the philosopher who is already purified. Finally, on the fourth level are the paradigmatic virtues of the divine Intellect, from which all the lower levels of virtue derive. Of particular interest are the second and third levels, summarised by Porphyry as follows:

> [T12] For this reason, at the purificatory level, "wisdom" consists in the soul's not sharing any opinions with the body, but acting on its own, and this is perfected by the pure exercise of the intellect; "moderation" is the result of taking care not to assent to any of the passions; "courage" is not being afraid to depart from the body, as if one were falling into some void of not-being; and "justice" is the result of reason and intellect dominating the soul with nothing to oppose them. [. . .] There is therefore another class of virtues, a third one, after the purificatory and the civic, which are those of the soul as it is exercising intellection. (At this level), wisdom, both theoretical and practical, consists in the contemplation of the contents of intellect; justice is the fulfilling (by each parts of the soul) of the role proper to it in following upon intellect and directing its activity towards intellect; moderation is the internal conversion (of the soul) towards intellect; and courage is detachment from the passions through which the soul assimilates itself to that towards which it turns its gaze, which is itself free from passions.[47]

As Antoine and Claire Guillaumont already remarked in their editions of the *Practicus* and the *Gnosticus*,[48] a similar "double list" of the four cardinal virtues (wisdom, courage, abstinence, justice) is also present in Evagrius Ponticus. The two editors considered Evagrius' source to be the Stoic tetrad of virtues.[49] In *Pract*. 89 Evagrius actually paraphrases parts of the Pseudo-Aristotelian *De virtute* and describes the specific "works" (ἔργα) of each virtue as applied to the monastic life. The "works" that Evagrius describes bear noteworthy similarities to the "purifications" found in Plotinus and Porphyry. Likewise, in *Gnost*. 44 Evagrius explains that the accomplished "gnostic" also displays the four cardinal virtues, yet their "works" differ from those on the level of πρακτική. Again, despite some differences regarding the functions of each virtue, the Evagrian model roughly corresponds to the "third level" of virtues described by Porphyry.

Although a more in-depth study of the two lists of virtues is needed, I would submit that the Plotinian-Porphyrian teaching on the degrees of virtue is very likely the direct source of inspiration for the Pontic father.

Equally important is the possible connection between Plotinus, Porphyry, and Evagrius regarding the concept of "freedom from passion" (ἀπάθεια). It has been customary since the studies of Antoine Guillaumont to explain the Evagrian term ἀπάθεια as a very clear example of Stoic influence on his thought.[50] In this case too, rather than searching for Stoic antecedents, I would suggest comparing Evagrius' use of the term with the extensive treatment of ἀπάθεια in Plotinus' *Enneads* (esp. *Enn*. I.2. and III.6.) and in Porphyry's works.

From the comparison offered above between Evagrius' and Porphyry's theories, it has become clear that the two authors explain the formation of passions within the framework of Platonic psychology and of Platonic and Aristotelian epistemology and ethics. Consequently, it should be possible to explain freedom from passions in the exact same framework (and not on the basis of Stoic philosophy). To mention only one example, in *Enn*. I.2.5, 22–32, Plotinus likens the relationship between the irrational and the rational parts in a purified or "impassible" soul to a person who "lives next door to a sage" and gradually becomes like him. This comparison only makes sense in the framework of Plato's tripartite psychology, in which the "reasoning" of the two lower parts of the soul can be persuaded – by the mere presence of the purified reason – to follow their "master." This view of ἀπάθεια, which differs in key points from Stoic impassibility, appears to be much closer to Evagrius' own Christian understanding of freedom from passions. This and all the points of comparison discussed in this chapter (perception, the origin of passions, the role of memory, opinion and imagination, the degrees of virtue, etc.) strongly suggest that a thorough re-evaluation of Evagrius' complex relationship with Stoicism and Late Antique Platonism is needed.

Notes

1 I wish to thank the organisers of the workshop "Platonism and Christian Thought in Late Antiquity" (Oslo, December 1–3, 2016) and the editors of this volume for the opportunity to present the results of my research. I am especially grateful to Prof. Eyólfur Kjalar Emilsson (Oslo) and to Michael Krewet (Berlin) for their useful comments on an earlier draft of this chapter.

2 I have used the following abbreviations for Evagrius' works: *Cogit. = De malignis cogitationibus*, ed. Géhin, Guillaumont and Guillaumont 1998; *Disc. = Capita cic auctoribus discipulis Euagrii*, ed. Géhin 2007; *Eulog. = Tractatus ad Eulogium*, ed. Fogielman 2017; *Gnost. = Gnosticus*, ed. Guillaumont and Guillaumont 1989; *KG = Kephalaia Gnostika,* ed. Guillaumont 1958; *Oct. Spir. = De octo spiritibus malitiae* (PG 79: 1145–1164); *Or. = De oratione*, ed. Géhin 2017; *Pract. = Practicus,* ed. Guillaumont and Guillaumont 1971; *Schol. Iob = Scholia in Iob*, ed. Hagedorn and Hagedorn 1994–2000; *Schol. Prov. = Scholia in Prouerbia*, ed. Géhin 1987; *Schol. Ps. = Scholia in Psalmos*, ed. Pitra 1876–1891.

3 See, above all, von Balthasar 1961–1969: 1, 256–273, 352–267.

4 See the numerous studies of Father Gabriel Bunge (most recently: Bunge 2004, 2010). Among the recent monographs which argue for the orthodox Christian character of Evagrius' thought, one could mention Dysinger 2005, Corrigan 2009, and Casiday 2013.

5 See Joest 1993; Tobon 2010.
6 Hieronymus, *Epistula* 133; *PL* 22: 1151.
7 Guillaumont and Guillaumont 1971: 100; Guillaumont 2004; Sorabji 2000: 357–371. See also Knuuttila 2004: 140–144.
8 Following Aristotle, *EN* X.7.1–3, 1177a12–27. See e.g. Porphyry, *Sent.* 32; Dillon, in Brisson 2005: 812. Evagrius, *Or.* 35 and 86, where Evagrius connects intellection and contemplation with pure prayer.
9 Porphyry, *De abst.* I.30.6–7; Clark 2000: 42.
10 In *De abst.* I.30.2 and in *Sent.* 4 Porphyry similarly speaks about an inclination (ῥοπή) towards bodies generated by the intelligible as a secondary power (Brisson 2005: 387).
11 Porphyry, *De abst.* I.29.4; Clark 2000: 41–42.
12 Porphyry, *De abst*. I.31.1; Clark 2000: 43, modified.
13 Géhin 2012.
14 Bunge 1989 has rightly stressed the need to interpret this expression within its Christian context. For the purpose of this study, I will however focus on its evident links with Porphyry.
15 Evagrius, *Or.* 110; Sinkewicz 2003: 205, modified.
16 Aristotle, *EN* X.7.9, 1178a 6–7.
17 For an in-depth discussion of Evagrius' anthropology and the role of the *nous*, see Tobon 2010: 15–89.
18 Guillaumont and Guillaumont 1971: 618–621.
19 Porphyry, *Sent*. 8–9; Dillon, in Brisson 2005: 796–797.
20 Evagrius, *Pract.* 52; Sinkewicz 2003: 106–107.
21 See e.g. Plotinus, *Enn.* I.1.1–4.
22 Porphyry, *De abst*. I.33, 2–6; Clark 2000: 43–44, slightly modified.
23 Porphyry, *Comm. in Ptol. Harm*.; Düring 1932: 13.19–14.14. For an English translation of the passage, see Barker 2015: 88–91. On the epistemology of the passage, see Tarrant 1993: 108–147; Chase 2010.
24 While older scholarship insisted on the "passive-receptive" nature of perception in Aristotle, new studies emphasise more and more the "active" nature of αἴσθησις in Aristotle's philosophy. For a recent overview, see Corcilius 2014. Two pioneering studies in this sense are Ebert 1983 and Bernard 1988. A comprehensive study on the nature of emotions in Aristotle, which fully takes into account Aristotle's epistemology and theory of perception, is offered by Krewet 2011.
25 Aristotle, *EN* X.4.4, 1174b14.
26 Aristotle, *EN* X.4.8, 1174b31–33.
27 Porphyry, *Sent.* 1; Dillon, in Brisson 2005: 798.
28 Porphyry, *De abst*., I.34.7; Clark 2000: 44.
29 Cf. also Aristotle, *EN* II.5.1–2, 1105b21–24: "By passions I mean desire, anger, fear, confidence, envy, joy, friendship, hatred, longing, jealousy, pity, and in general *that which is accompanied by pleasure and pain*". See also Plato, *Tim.* 42a–b.
30 For a thorough discussion of envy (φθόνος), see Plato, *Phileb*. 48b–50a.
31 Evagrius, *Eulog*. 23; Sinkewicz 2003: 49, modified.
32 Evagrius, *Pract*. 35; Sinkewicz 2003: 104. The importance of these passages for Evagrius' teaching on passions has already been pointed out by Antoine Guillaumont 2004: 208–209, and Monica Tobon 2010: 144.
33 Evagrius, *Pract*. 4; Sinkewicz 2003: 97.
34 Evagrius, *Oct. Spir*. 11, PG 79: 1156d. See Tobon 2010: 143.
35 See e.g. Evagrius, *Schol. Prov.* 4 (Géhin 1987: 94); *Schol. Iob* 9.32–33 (Hagedorn and Hagedorn 1994–2000: 2, 104–105). For the question of authorship of the *Scholia in Iob*, see Casiday 2006: 123–124, 224.
36 Evagrius, *Schol. Ps.* (Pitra 1876–1891: 3, 234), cf. *KG* I.36 (Guillaumont 1958: 32–35), *KG* II.83 (Hausherr 1939: 230). See further Alexander, *De anima liber cum mantissa* 39.4–5, Themistius, *Paraphrasis in libros Aristotelis de anima* 78.10–11.

37 Evagrius, *Pract*. 34; Sinkewicz 2003: 103.
38 Evagrius, *Cogit*. 2; Sinkewicz 2003: 154.
39 Sorabji 2000: 343–356.
40 For a discussion of Seneca's concept of emotions, see Krewet 2013: 133–140.
41 Cf. the Evagrian sentence edited by Muyldermans 1952: 37: Λογισμὸς δαιμονιώδης ἐστὶ, νόημα πράγματος αἰσθητοῦ θυμὸν ἢ ἐπιθυμίαν παρὰ φύσιν κινῶν "The demonic thought is the mental representation of a sensible object which moves the irascible or the appetitive (part) against nature."
42 Evagrius, *Pract*. 74–75; Sinkewicz 2003: 110.
43 Gibbons 2015.
44 See Aristotle, *EN*, II.1, 1103a14–1103b25, and Krewet 2013: 174–181.
45 See Porphyry, *De abst.* I.29.5–6; Evagrius, *Gnost*. 45.
46 On this topic, see Dillon 1983, Thiel 2001. I thank Wolfgang Hoyer for this reference.
47 Porphyry, *Sent.* 32; Dillon, in Brisson 2005: 810–812.
48 Guillaumont and Guillaumont 1971: 680–689; Guillaumont and Guillaumont 1989: 172–177.
49 Guillaumont and Guillaumont 1989: 175.
50 Guillaumont and Guillaumont 1971: 100.

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15 Augustine on eudaimonia as life project and object of desire

Tomas Ekenberg

> When they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some scoffed; but others said, "We will hear you again about this."
>
> (Acts 17:32)

Recent scholarship has done much to clarify the extent to which Augustine engages with Stoic and (Neo)platonic thought in relation to his own moral psychology and his metaphysics, but on the overall question of the place of happiness in ethics and how Augustine's views on moral psychology connects with his views on value there remains work to be done. For while scholars are quick to point out affinities between Augustine and the ancients in the details; there are profound disagreements with respect to the big picture, and in particular with respect to his basic outlook on moral psychology as a whole, and, most notably, as regards the question whether he should be considered a eudaimonist or not.

I will begin by outlining a case in point. Nicholas Wolterstorff recently argued that Augustine broke with the traditional eudaimonism of the ancients, and that his ethical framework is characterised by a completely new understanding of the goal of human endeavours, a new notion of happiness.[1] Also recently, Christian Tornau has argued that Augustine's view of happiness, while thoroughly informed by a Christian outlook, is firmly rooted in ancient eudaimonism.[2] Prima facie, the precise point of disagreement seems remarkably difficult to pin down. The two scholars seem to approach the issue of Augustine's view of happiness from very different angles. While Wolterstorff's focus is exclusively on what is described as Augustine's rejection of a key tenet of ancient eudaimonism, Tornau, and many other commentators insist that happiness plays basically the same role in Augustine as it did in all the ancient philosophers. In Augustine, as in the ancients, happiness is the ultimate end of human action. However, in the case of Augustine, we must add the (admittedly significant) qualification that for Augustine true happiness can be attained only in the afterlife.

To my mind, Wolterstorff is right in holding that Augustine's view of happiness differs from that of Stoics and Peripatetics. However, I will argue that Augustine's development of the theme of happiness is much more continuous with ancient

ethical debate than Wolterstorff allows himself to suggest. As an upshot of my argument, I make the possibly provocative suggestion that Augustine was much more of an Epicurean than is commonly assumed. Looking through the Epicurean lens will help us see Augustine's eudaimonism more clearly as an example of a typical, and commonly taken, late ancient approach to moral thought. There are of course aspects of the Epicurean brand of philosophising that Augustine must reject, most obviously their materialist theology, their denial of providence, and their view of religious ritual as completely pointless. With these admittedly important aspects out of the way, however, I believe his agreement with the Epicureans in ethical matters runs much deeper than his agreement with the Stoics. If I am right, then Augustine could be described as finding in Epicureanism a kernel of moral-psychological truth not readily obtainable from the rival accounts. While his metaphysics and even anthropology owes more to Platonism, his ethics contains elements that are distinctively Epicurean, and he is either a quasi- or semi-hedonist, depending on perspective. Most importantly, those aspects that Wolterstorff find distinctively un-ancient in Augustine – aspects which Wolterstorff finds modern – are actually very much ancient and very much part of the philosophical discussion still in Augustine's own time.

I will begin by briefly outlining Augustine's attitude to philosophy, in general, and to ethics or moral philosophising, in particular. In the ensuing section, I discuss the typical characteristics of ancient eudaimonism as Wolterstorff sees them, and also his argument – an argument that purportedly shows that Augustine does not subscribe to eudaimonism but indeed rejects it. In the section titled "Epicurean Suffering" I then go on to compare Augustine's view of the human predicament with the Epicurean outlook, and locate the points of affinity. Finally, in the concluding section, I summarise my findings and suggest a way to mitigate the conflict between commentators Wolterstorff and Tornau. There is, I hold, a way to understand Augustine's position that renders not only Tornau but also Wolterstorff right, or at any rate very nearly right. Tornau is right to claim that happiness is the ultimate end of action, and he is right in conceding to this claim the pride of place in both ancient and Augustinian eudaimonism. Wolterstorff, on the other hand, correctly dissociates Augustine from a Stoic view of happiness, where happiness is measured by the ideal of the life of the disinterested sage. Wolterstorff is also partly right in associating Augustinian happiness with a kind of pleasure or (a sense of) well-being, but I will argue that while a strong case can be made that Augustine at least preliminarily identifies *un*happiness with *dis*pleasure – pain and misery and unspecified mental "troubles," the case is not as clear "on the upside." For this much is clear: Augustine is far from suggesting that a state of happiness is identical to the experience of well-being in the sense of bodily pleasure. And if we still want to maintain that Augustine thinks happiness – and the aim of all human action – is pleasure, the onus is squarely on us to explain what we mean by "pleasure" in this context. I end by making the case for the claim that Augustine's moral theory is indeed a form of eudaimonism, and by describing Augustine's position in relation to that of Stoics and that of Epicureans.

Augustine and philosophy

Augustine did not himself build a single, coherent philosophical system, but rather responded to various philosophical issues as they came up, and in doing so he appropriated a variety of philosophical vocabularies and conceptual frameworks, which he found in the debates of his time. If we compare him to, say, Plotinus, from whom Augustine drew much philosophical inspiration, then Augustine looks positively unsystematic in his endeavours and eclectic (to say the least) in his choices of philosophical alliances and borrowings. But once we view him instead as a philosophically informed rhetorician and a Christian cleric (which of course he was) then he starts to make sense. He was working under the assumption that a philosophy – or rather, the one true philosophy – lay hidden in Christian doctrine and could be distilled from it by an intelligent and scholarly believer. Under such conditions, philosophising becomes tantamount to a kind of translation. What Augustine needs to do in order to clearly lay out his *vera philosophia* is to translate the simplistic and often obscure language of Scripture into the sophisticated and precise language of a learned Roman. With this in mind, it is easy to see why and how Augustine uses the ancient philosophers in his more philosophical moments.

Like most ancient philosophy, Augustine's moral thinking starts from the question how we shall proceed in order to secure happiness and to attain a truly happy life. He thinks we all want to be happy, and so we all want the answer to this question. And moreover he thinks that in principle, there is absolutely no conflict between our *wanting* to be happy and our actually being morally upright human beings. On the contrary, being moral *requires* wanting your own happiness, since only if you want to be happy will you actually become happy when you get those things you want. We find here no conflict of the sort we see in post-Kantian ethics, that is, a purported conflict between, on the one hand, the pursuit of happiness and, on the other, pursuit of purely moral ends, or between self-interest and duty.[3]

In early works such as *De beata vita* and *De libero arbitrio*, Augustine proceeds as one would expect from someone who stands squarely in the philosophical discussions of his time: he thinks we each and all want happiness, and asks how do we attain it? In order to be happy we need to have those things we want to have, and the things should be such that we need not worry about losing them once acquired. And so if we want to be happy we had better pursue things within reach and "in our power," and the more secure our grip on them, the better. Unlike worldly things such as money and friends and family, things like wisdom and virtue are indeed in our power, and so what we ought to aim at is wisdom, virtue, and what Augustine calls a good will, *bona voluntas*. What Augustine has given us is basically an ethical outlook which both Neoplatonists and Stoics agree on, and so nothing here is very controversial.[4] In the first book of *De libero arbitrio*, Augustine describes the good will to his friend Evodius as "a will by which we seek to live rightly and honorably, and to attain the highest wisdom."[5]

So far, Augustine sounds thoroughly ancient, and so far there seems to be no reason to think his views on happiness are very different from those of the ancients. Consequently, we find here no reason to think he rejects eudaimonism,

if by eudaimonism we mean the view that happiness should be considered the human good, and the human *telos*.

But there are of course certain Christian tenets that do not sit well with the basic ethical assumptions of most pagan philosophies, and among these are the doctrines of the fall of the human race, of salvation, and of the afterlife. Against the background of these doctrines, morality is not so much about living well in this life as about preparing for the next. And because the first human beings Adam and Eve rebelled, the human race as a whole has been condemned, human nature has become corrupted, and all human beings are now born into sin.

In the picture that emerges, a good will is not something we can work our way towards on our own. Instead a good will is always and entirely a gratuitous gift from God. As we move on into Augustine's later works, things get complicated, as of course they should. Augustine still thinks all human beings aim at happiness, and he still thinks a central problem for philosophy is to answer why some people fail to aim at happiness proper and aim at merely apparent happiness instead. At this point, however, Augustine is clearly in partial disagreement with the ancient philosophers, or at least the Stoics, though possibly also the Neoplatonists. For while Augustine emphatically agrees with the Platonists in their rejection of materialism, his insistence that human beings are utterly unable even through intellectual means to bring about the good life seems to run counter to Neoplatonic (intellectualist) assumptions about moral perfection.[6]

Happiness seems still to be the principal human good, but it is now unclear how much we can think of happiness as an end of human action or of human activity, or as a life project.[7] Is happiness really within reach for a given human being, and is it within reach inside of this life? If happiness is not to be found in this world, then can it really still function as an end of a person's activities? And even if happiness in some guise or other is to be found in this world, and if there are instances of people that are happy to some degree or other, it seems a person's happiness is not of her own doing. Augustine seems to deny as much. If only good willed human beings are happy and a good will is a gift from God, it seems happiness is also a gift from God. But then happiness cannot be the result of an activity, and even less itself an activity. Happiness is something a human being passively receives and seems to that extent completely unrelated to anything that same human being might do.

Happiness as activity

Now while ancient eudaimonists disagreed on many things, there are arguably a few points where the ancient schools agreed on substantial issues. In her book *Morality of Happiness*, Julia Annas argues that there are certain "formal requirements" on ethical theory on which the ancients would concur. For instance – and this is often pointed out – by "happiness," they typically did not refer merely to a certain sensation or passing feeling or mood, but rather to (in Aristotle's words) "living well and doing well," and they insist that thinking about morality requires,

in some way, taking into account a person's life as a whole. The happy person, on this account, is not merely cheerful here and now, and perhaps he need not even be cheerful ever. A happy person in the sense of enjoying *eudaimonia* is a person that has a good and fulfilling and admirable life as a whole, a life that exhibits human flourishing, as this point is often expressed in the literature.

A further, related, point on which the ancients agree according to Annas is the notion that the good life must be up to the agent, or must be of the agent's doing in some important respect. She discusses this notion at length in her book, and it is this feature – or rather lack of it – that Nicholas Wolterstorff has on in his discussion of Augustine's view of happiness. The basic idea developed by Aristotle and others is that happiness is an end, a telos: not an end in the sense of end point or end product, but rather an end in the sense of the activity or activities that make up a good life as a whole. According to Annas, there is a near universal agreement among the ancients that happiness is not a thing that someone else might bring about in you – happiness is not something that someone might give you.[8] The morally good person plays an active role in that same good person's own life. The end state of moral development, should we ever reach it, is a way of life or a way of living. Specifying that way of life, or specifying the *telos* of human beings, crucially involves making clear what sort of activity the good person is involved in. Consequently, happiness is activity. Julia Annas brings our attention to a quotation from Arius Didymus, who in the course of explicating Aristotle's ethics, makes this point very clearly:

> [H]appiness is [identical to] activity (*energeia*) in accordance with virtue in actions that are preferred, as one would wish them. Bodily and external goods are called *productive* of happiness by contributing towards it when present; but those who think that they *fulfill* (*sumpleroun*) happiness do not know that happiness is life, and life is the fulfilment of (*sumpeplerotai*) of action. No bodily or external good is in itself an action or in general an activity.[9]

On this note, Wolterstorff argues that Augustine in the *Confessions* is operating with a notion of happiness that is clearly very different from the *eudaimonia* of the ancient philosophers.[10] Whereas the ancient philosophers subscribed to the so-called Activity Principle, according to which the happy life is a life essentially consisting in certain form of activity, Augustine thinks of happiness in much more passive terms. By happiness, Augustine means joy – *gaudium* – and joy is clearly not an activity but an experiential state, a feeling. The goal for human beings is true happiness and true happiness consists in the experience of the true joy that can only be had – i.e. felt – by the faithful believer:

> O Lord, (. . .) far be it from me to think that whatever joy I feel makes me truly happy. For there is a joy *(gaudium)* that is not given to those who do not love you, but only to those who love you for your own sake. (. . .) This is true happiness, and there is no other. Those who think that there is another kind

> of happiness look for joy elsewhere, but theirs is not true joy. Yet their minds are set on something akin to joy.[11]

The passage quoted is from the *Confessions*. The conception of happiness as joy is, however, arguably in place already from the start, and can be found in Augustine's early work *De libero arbitrio*. For in discussing the good life, Augustine identifies happiness not with the activity of living rightly and honourably – an activity in which the person with a good will is clearly involved – but rather with the joy a person experiences in possessing such a good will:

> AUGUSTINE: Hence if it is precisely by a good will that we embrace and take delight in this [good] will, and put it ahead of all the things that we are unable to retain just by willing to do so, then, as the argument has shown, our mind will possess those very virtues whose possession is the same thing as living rightly and honorably. The upshot is that anyone who wills to live rightly and honorably, if he wills himself to will this instead of transient goods, acquires so great a possession with such ease that having what he willed is nothing other for him than willing it.
>
> EVODIUS: To tell the truth, I can scarcely keep myself from shouting for joy, when such a great and easily acquired good has suddenly sprung up before me!
>
> AUGUSTINE: If indeed the joy (*gaudium*) occasioned by acquiring this good elevates the mind calmly, peacefully, and steadfastly, this is called the happy life. You do not think that living happily is something other than rejoicing in genuine and certain goods, do you?[12]

Now while I agree that Augustine may not in the end subscribe to the Activity Principle, I think he is not alone in rejecting it, or he would at least not be alone in finding it problematic. Other ancient philosophers would, too. The way it is presented by Annas and Wolterstorff it seems indeed to express a key characteristic of the Aristotelian notion of happiness as virtue, i.e. as activity in accordance with reason, and the principle could perhaps also be made to square with the Stoic notion of action in accordance with nature and (natural) reason. But as regards hedonism, things are decidedly less clear. Annas argues that Epicureanism does indeed fulfill her criteria for eudaimonistic ethics, but while Epicurus insists that the virtue prudence is of utmost importance, he associates happiness rather with the *consequences* of prudent action than with prudent activity. He does not claim that happiness is somehow constitutive of, or is to be identified with the performance of, the prudent action itself. The Neoplatonic view of happiness is also problematic. Does for instance the Neoplatonic notion of ascent – of the soul's gradual elevation to the level of goodness-itself – fulfill the criteria? Is the ascent to be considered an action rather than something given from above, and does the Neoplatonic ascent involve the right sort of planning and decision-making based on the comprehensive notion of a person's life as a whole, which seems to be central to the notion of happiness as an activity as Annas describes it?[13]

I suggest that in order to get clearer about Augustine's notion of happiness we should look at the way it might be taken to be developed from a starting point which is clearly ancient, and clearly eudaimonistic, but which is not informed by the Activity Principle.

Epicurean suffering

In book 6 of *Confessions*, Augustine complains about his own hedonistic ways. He is at this point living in Milan. Plans are made to get him married, and he sends his concubine back to Africa. However, he then takes another mistress. All the while, he is increasingly troubled by his own ways, even if his inner life does not yet exhibit the level of inner turmoil and bitter conflict we will see later, in book 8.

> So far nothing called me back from the depth of the gulf of carnal pleasure save fear of death and of the judgment to come, which, through all the fluctuations of my opinions, never left my mind. I discussed with my friends Alypius and Nebridius concerning the nature of good and evil, and Epicurus would certainly have won the palm in my judgment if I had not believed that after death there remained a life for the soul and treatment according to its deserts, which Epicurus did not hold.[14]

He describes his life at this point as being dominated by the pursuit of carnal pleasures, but also as afflicted and unhappy. His pain and suffering are laid out in terms which would have made a lot of sense to an Epicurean, because what he is describing is precisely the sort of condition to which the Epicurean proposes a cure. Augustine seeks pleasure, physical pleasure, but he is held back by his fear of death and his fear of divine judgment in the afterlife. Thus his fear of death and his fear of divine judgment in the afterlife keep him from being happy. And the Epicureans, of course, think that the fear of death and the terror of divine justice are the very roots of the problem. The Epicureans think philosophical insight is required in order to rid a person of these obstacles to happiness. They deny that the gods are in any way invested in the conduct of human beings. They also argue that death is really the end, and that there is no afterlife except for the scattering of the atoms out of which one was once composed. Therefore, worrying about one's mortality is pointless. Humans fear death for no good reason. By realising that the temporal existence of human beings is the thing we should focus on exclusively, we need simply to organise our lives so as to minimise pain and suffering, and this is according to the Epicureans not too difficult to accomplish. Happiness is thus within the reach of most.

Note however that there are at least two ways we might read Augustine's conditional approval of Epicurus here. The first reading is that the only view or thesis Augustine is here associating with Epicurus is the identification of the human good with pleasure, physical pleasure in particular. That would explain why he next complains that "[he was] so drowned and blinded in it that [he] could not

conceive that light of honor, and of beauty loved for its own sake, which the eye of flesh does not see but only the innermost soul."[15] On this reading, the immature Augustine tentatively agrees with Epicurus that those bodily pleasures he pursues are really good and choice worthy and bemoans the fact that he cannot fully enjoy these pleasures. And the reason he cannot fully enjoy them is that he wavers in his opinions. He is thrown back and forth between a desire to satisfy his various urges and a fear of having to suffer the painful consequences of satisfying these urges. What he later sees is that the bodily desires are not really directed at what is good, but that what is really good is virtue and beauty, each of which is a good of the soul rather than mere bodily goods.

On the second reading, Augustine thinks Epicurus is right in his analysis of *evil* rather than in his analysis of good. What chiefly keeps us from being happy is the fear of death and the fear of divine judgment. Indeed, this is really Epicurus's view! But according to Augustine, Epicurus is wrong in thinking that there is no afterlife. Because there is an afterlife, the Epicurean cure for unhappiness does not work. We cannot become happy simply by minimising pain in this life and by ceasing to worry about death as Epicurus suggests. Augustine instead suggests that the only way to make the good things productive of real happiness is to make the good things last, and last forever. "Suppose we were immortals and could live in perpetual enjoyment of the body without any fear of loss – why should we not then be happy? or what else should we seek?"[16] The problem Augustine is pointing to is not primarily that the pleasure is carnal, physical, bodily, but that it is transient. He thinks that the experience of pleasure will always be tainted by the insight that this pleasure must end. This is the young Augustine. The older Augustine, the narrator, of course goes on to censure his younger self, and point out that there are other more noble goods than mere physical pleasure, but the point remains. The fact that happiness in any shape or form is made inaccessible by the fear of death, by the mere awareness of the finitude of this life, is a point which Augustine clearly sticks to. In *De trinitate* XIII.8 he argues that anyone who wants to be happy must really want to be happy eternally, or else that person does not will to be happy at all.[17]

I suggest that Augustine the narrator considers Epicurus's notion that the cause of unhappiness is our fear of death to be an important insight, but he does not think that the Epicurean cure will work. I would even go as far as to suggest that we find in Augustine a form of semi-Epicureanism, or Epicureanism "on the downside." If we restrict ourselves so as to look at Augustine's view of the moral significance of negative emotion, of discomfort, pain, and anxiety only, the outlook is that of the hedonist. On the question of life's miseries, he squarely places himself on the Epicurean side, opposite the Stoics. The Stoics insist that pain is a passion and passions are radically groundless. They are either effects of, or identical to, false beliefs – which means that pain is merely the figment of a warped soul's imagination. By contrast, the Epicureans and Augustine hold that the badness in the world is really there. Pain is for them very real, really an evil, and very important – indeed by some lights the very starting point of the entire moral-philosophical endeavor.

His preoccupation with the Epicureans should not be seen as a passing phase. He agrees with them. The starting point of morality is the question how we can become happy. The question is raised precisely because we are not happy. The chief reason we are not happy, moreover, is the fact that we fear death and pain and judgment. This fear consistently blocks our path to happiness. Whatever pleasures and joys we experience, these are always accompanied and marred by this fear. Perhaps the level of our disquietude is even inversely proportional to the level of elation, at least at times. The more Augustine seeks carnal pleasure, the more uneasy and unsettled and unsure he becomes. The constant, I suggest, is the anxiety, and since the Epicurean cognitive therapy does not work, Augustine will have to look for other solutions. But if I am right his diagnosis of unhappiness is the same as Epicurus's, which means his solution also promises the same kind of happiness or peace of mind – at least as one of its components – precisely insofar as his solution relieves us of the anxiety in question.

Concluding remarks

To conclude, let us return to Wolterstorff's contention that Augustine rejects the ancient notion of happiness. I believe Augustine does indeed reject one of the two formal constraints, which inform the type of eudaimonism that Wolterstorff delineates, following Annas. However, these constraints are clearly formulated chiefly in the light of ethical assumptions broadly Aristotelian. While Stoic ethics could perhaps arguably be shoe-horned into the suggested theoretical mould, things start looking positively grim once we turn to consider also Epicureans and Platonists.

What unites ancient ethicists is their eudaimonism and their insistence that ethical inquiry starts in considerations about what constitutes a good, happy, and fulfilling way of living. In this regard, the Epicureans are clearly not at the fringe of the ethical debate, but *in medias res*. According to them, the highest good is pleasure and the supreme form of pleasure is the absence of pain. And so happiness is a state of mind (as we would say today) rather than a form of activity. Augustine agrees. If I am right, then Augustine's argument could be reconstructed as follows: From a human standpoint, evil – even utter evil – is a state of mind. Evil is to be associated with misery, pain, anxiety, and with the effects of the divided and disordered soul. Since the opposite of evil is goodness, goodness must also be associated with a state of mind, or an experiential state. Augustine calls this experiential state, the state which characterises the blessed, *gaudium*, or joy. The person who experiences pure joy is afflicted by no evil, experiences no anxiety, and feels no pain. The good that the blessed person possesses is accordingly joy, and joy is the same as happiness, or *eudaimonia*. Augustine does not give us much in the way of specifics as regards the feeling that is happiness, apart from arguably identifying it with the feeling of hope for heavenly happiness.[18] Very possibly he holds that happiness proper is a state towards which we may proceed, but the nature or character of which is beyond human intellectual comprehension. Exactly what this happiness feels like in the end eludes description and is beyond words, like God. It (and He) can only be felt.

One thing is clear. Happiness is not simply bodily pleasure. If an Epicurean were to suggest that pleasure is exclusively the result of satisfaction of bodily desires, then of course Augustine thinks there are other, nobler kinds of pleasure.[19] There are higher and better kinds of joy. But Augustine and Epicurus both agree that happiness is, from the human point of view, a state of mind. And happiness is, for humans, the ultimate end and the best and highest and most valuable good.

Hence, to the extent that Augustine is – let's say – a "classical" eudaimonist, he is more Epicurean than Stoic. All things considered he is of course neither, but a Christian eudaimonist. In placing Augustine in the Epicurean camp we have had to bracket the other-worldly aspects of Augustine's philosophy. Now if I am right, then a careful, unambiguous assessment of Augustine's position must take into account our own stance on those fundamental issues, which underpin his entire take on moral philosophy. If we place ourselves among the believers, then what Augustine lays out is simply and straightforwardly an (or perhaps "the") eudaimonist Christian ethics. If not, his mature position is best described as that of a confused and mistaken Epicurean. In any case, his view is eudaimonist.

The temptation for an interpreter who applies the perspective of the non-believer is to over-emphasise Augustine's downgrading of pleasure, or physical pleasure in particular. Paired with the assumption that such "contempt of the flesh" should put him in stark opposition with hedonism (an assumption which, treated with care, is correct) leads to the defective conclusion that he must favor some version of the Stoic notion of the supreme and intrinsic value of virtue. Whereas from Augustine's own perspective, the Stoic view is deficient in precisely the same way as the Epicurean: "It may be supposed that the Stoics live 'by the rule of the spirit,' because they place man's highest good in the mind; and what is man's mind, but spirit? But in fact both [Epicureans and Stoics] live 'by the rule of the flesh,' as divine Scripture uses the expression."[20] Happiness is the sole ultimate goal of moral action and life. The task of the moral philosopher is the elucidation of the principles or conditions of the happy life. The Stoic collapses the two concepts of happiness and virtue completely. Being virtuous is being happy. For the Epicurean, virtue, and happiness – i.e. pleasure or well-being – are distinct, and the former is a means to the latter. For Augustine too, virtue is a means, but happiness is the direct and unmediated communion with God, a relationship which is identical to a state of perfect bliss.

Notes

1 Wolterstorff 2014.
2 Tornau 2015. See also Rist 2015, where Wolterstorff's interpretation is critically assessed. A comprehensive overview of Augustine's ethics can be found in Kent 2001.
3 This is not to claim that Augustine considered all kinds of self-serving behavior morally unproblematic or morally indifferent. There are different kinds of self-love, the mature Augustine explains. Among these, only some are consistent with moral motivation, whereas others are clearly pathological and evil. See e.g. O'Donovan's careful discussion in his 1980.
4 Frede 2011 argued that Augustine's notion of the will in *De libero arbitrio* can be more or less directly traced back especially to Stoic antecedents. Consequently,

Augustine's moral-psychological outlook as a whole should be seen as closely related to that of earlier, pagan philosophers. For a detailed study of Augustine's engagement with Stoic ideas also in his mature works, see Byers 2011.

5 Augustine, *Lib. arb.* 1.12.25 (CCSL 29, 227): "Voluntas, qua adpetimus recte honesteque uiuere et ad summam sapientiam peruenire."

6 For critique of the interpretation that Augustine's own conception of moral progress is consonant with the Neoplatonists' notion of ascent, see Williams 2002 and King 2014. I return to the issue of Augustine's relation to Stoic ethics below.

7 See e.g. Augustine, *Trin.* 13.4.7 (CCSL 50A, 390–391) for the claim that all human beings will to be happy – and should so will – in the context of Augustine's mature approach to ethics.

8 Annas 1995: 36–42.

9 Annas 1995: 45.

10 Wolterstorff 2014: 48–49.

11 Augustine, *Conf.* 10.22.32 (CCSL 27, 172), quoted in Wolterstorff 2014: 52. The translation is by R. S. Pine-Coffin in Augustine, *Confessions* (London: Penguin, 1984, reprint of 1961). "Absit, domine, absit a corde serui tui, qui confitetur tibi, absit, ut, quocumque gaudio gaudeam, beatum me putem. Est enim gaudium, quod non datur impiis, sed eis, qui te gratis colunt, quorum gaudium tu ipse es. Et ipsa est beata uita, gaudere ad te, de te, propter te: ipsa est et non est altera. Qui autem aliam putant esse, aliud sectantur gaudium neque ipsum uerum. Ab aliqua tamen imagine gaudii uoluntas eorum non auertitur."

12 Augustine, *Lib. arb.* 1.13.29 (CCSL 29, 230–231). "A. Hanc igitur uoluntatem si bona itidem uoluntate diligamus atque amplectamur rebusque omnibus, quas retinere non quia uolumus possumus, anteponamus, consequenter illae uirtutes, ut ratio docuit, animum nostrum incolent, quas habere id ipsum est recte honesteque uiuere. Ex quo conficitur ut, quisquis recte honesteque uult uiuere, si id se uelle prae fugacibus bonis uelit, adsequatur tantam rem tanta facilitate, ut nihil aliud ei quam ipsum uelle sit habere quod uoluit. E. Vere tibi dico, uix me contineo quin exclamem laetitia, repente mihi oborto tam magno et tam in facili constituto bono. A. Atqui hoc ipsum gaudium quod huius boni adeptione gignitur, cum tranquille et quiete atque constanter erigit animum, beata uita dicitur; nisi tu putas aliud esse beate uiuere quam ueris bonis certisque gaudere."

13 For an illuminating discussion of different ancient approaches to the relation between happiness and time (and so between ethics and the conception of a life as a whole), see Emilsson 2015.

14 Augustine, *Conf.* 6.16.26 (CCSL 27, 90). "Nec me reuocabat a profundiore uoluptatum carnalium gurgite nisi metus mortis et futuri iudicii tui, qui per uarias quidem opiniones, numquam tamen recessit de pectore meo. Et disputabam cum amicis meis Alypio et Nebridio de finibus bonorum et malorum Epicurum accepturum fuisse palmam in animo meo, nisi ego credidissem post mortem restare animae vitam et tractus meritorum, quod Epicurus credere noluit."

15 *Ibid*. (CCSL 27, 90–91). "[I]ta demersus et caecus cogitare non possem lumen honestatis et gratis amplectendae pulchritudinis, quam non uidet oculus carnis, et uidetur ex intimo." As it turns out, the relation between the physical or bodily aspect of a human being and Augustine's Pauline notion of the flesh is a tricky matter. I return to this issue below, in the concluding remarks.

16 Augustine, *Conf.* 6.16.26 (CCSL 27, 90) "Et quaerebam, si essemus inmortales et in perpetua corporis uoluptate sine ullo amissionis terrore uiueremus, cur non essemus beati aut quid aliud quaereremus."

17 "And further, how will that opinion be true, which has been so tried, and sifted, and thoroughly strained, and is so certain, viz. that all men will to be blessed, if they themselves who are already blessed neither will nor do not will to be blessed? Or if they will it, as truth proclaims, as nature constrains, in which indeed the supremely good and

unchangeably blessed Creator has implanted that will: if, I say, they will to be blessed who are blessed, certainly they do not will to be not blessed. But if they do not will not to be blessed, without doubt they do not will to be annihilated and perish in regard to their blessedness. But they cannot be blessed except they are alive; therefore they do not will so to perish in regard to their life. Therefore, whoever are either truly blessed or desire to be so, will to be immortal. But he does not live blessedly who has not that which he wills. Therefore it follows that in no way can life be truly blessed unless it be eternal." (See CCSL 50A, 397–398.).

18 See *Trin.* 13.7.10 (CCSL 50A, 395).

19 Is there, though, any reason to think that the special kind of pleasure which Epicureans pursue – the pleasure that is identified with the absence of all pain – is there any reason to call this pleasure a pleasure *of the body*? Of this I am not convinced.

20 Augustine, *Civ. Dei* 14.2 (CCSL 48, 415). "Stoicis autem, qui summum bonum hominis in animo ponunt, secundum spiritum uiuere, quia et hominis animus quid est nisi spiritus? Sed sicut loquitur scriptura diuina, secundum carnem uiuere utrique monstrantur." Trans. Bettenson 2004.

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Index of Greek, Latin and Syriac words

Select Greek words

ἀγαθός 52–53, 58n19, 143n15, 143n19, 161
ἀγαθότης 146n66, 161, 174n61
ἀγαθουργία 161
ἄγαλμα 131
ἀγάπη 233n73
ἀγένητον 112n113
ἁγιαστεία, ἱερά 158
ἀδιαιρέτως 158
ἀδιαστάτως 231n48
ἀεικίνητος στάσις 246
ἄΐδιον (ἀίδιον) 44n12, 105, 131, 143nn15–16, 143nn24–25
αἶνος 162–163
αἴσθησις 260, 262, 265, 271n24
αἰσθητόν 132, 134, 140–141, 154, 177n113, 267, 272n41
αἰτία 106, 109, 189, 231n53
αἰών 111n8
ἀλήθεια 33–34, 195n74
ἀλογία 260
ἄλογος 267
ἁμαρτία 232n64
ἀμέθεκτον 231n54
ἀμετρία 82
ἀναγωγή 182–183, 193n41
ἀναλογία 45n26, 183, 192n22
ἀνάμνησις 169
ἄναρχος 109
ἀνείδεον 82
ἀνέκλειπτος 101
ἄνθρωπος 174n51, 174n62, 207, 233n74, 260
ἀντίληψις 262, 265
ἀόρατος 134
ἀόριστον 82
ἀπάθεια 258–259, 261, 268, 270
ἀπειρία 82, 101, 111n8
ἀπολογητής 166
ἀρετή 139, 232n63, 233n74, 260, 268
ἄριστος 132
ἀρχέτυπον 232n63
ἀρχή 109, 158, 182, 196n98
ἄρχων 58n17
ἀσυγχύτως 158, 231n39
ἀσώματος 132
ἄτομον 203, 207
ἀτρέπτως 158
αὔταρκες 231n53
αὐτοδύναμις 230n11
αὐτόθεος 221
αὐτολόγος 230n11
αὐτοσοφία 230n11
ἀφαίρεσις 68–69
ἀφθόνως 185–186, 194n51
ἀφομοίωμα 228, 233n69
ἀφομοίωσις 228, 233n71
ἄχρονος 104
ἀχωρίστως 158
βούλεσθαι 105–106
γένεσις 33–34, 98n44, 110, 140, 230n30
γενητόν 113n52
γιγνόμενον 34, 101, 109
γνήσιος 139
γνῶσις 105, 138, 187, 195n74
γοητεία 172n32, 173n45, 177n117
δαίμων 52, 54–56, 58n17, 58n19, 58n23, 58n27, 59n37
δεκτικός 185
δημιουργός 105, 107, 140, 143n15, 143n20
διακόσμησις 188, 192n30
διαστατῶς 155
διάστημα 246
διαφορά 201, 210, 216n49
δόξα 187, 263
δοξαστόν 195n71
δύναμις 58n17, 58n23, 136, 142n16, 146n66, 155, 174n51, 188, 211, 213, 224, 232nn57–58, 259, 262
εἶδος 134
εἰκός 142nn12–13
εἰκών 102, 232n63, 233n69

εἶναι 142, 204
Ἐκκλησία 177n113
ἔλεγχος 59n37
ἐλλάμπω 243
ἕν 232n66, 233n73
ἐνδεές 82
ἐνέργεια 112n23, 137, 183, 211, 213, 231n53, 232n57, 262
ἔννοια 23, 69, 262
ἕνωσις 159, 183, 233n71
ἕξις 103, 187, 233n73
ἐξουσία 146n66
ἐξουσιαρχία 189
ἐπιθυμητικόν 264
ἐπιθυμία 260, 265, 272n41
ἐπιλάμπω 243, 247
ἐπιστήμη 155, 183, 185–187, 194n60, 195n74, 262
ἐπιστροφή 183
ἐπιτηδειότης 71, 74n54, 103, 155–156, 173n35
ἔργον 58n19, 161, 163–164, 269
ἔρως, θεῖος 162, 193n41
εὐφροσύνη 137–138, 193n41
εὐχαριστία 158
ζωή 260
ἡδονή 262, 265
θεανδρική ἐνέργεια 159, 174n62, 185, 196n96
θεάνθρωπος 159
θεαρχία 182, 189
θέλειν 104
θέλησις 146n66
θεοειδές 156–157
θεολογία 158, 160, 162, 173n50
θεομίμητον 192n38
θεοπλαστία 159
θεός 54–56, 58n19, 58n21, 58n27, 154, 156, 161, 163–164, 171n19, 174n51, 174n62, 177n113, 189, 193n39, 230n30, 232n63, 233n71
θεοσοφία 155, 182
θεουργία 9, 151, 155, 158–160, 162–165, 169, 172n23, 173n45, 175n87, 192n37
θεουργικός 175n96
θεουργός 157–158, 165, 174n51
θεοφάνεια 58n19
θεσμός 185, 193n48, 194n54
θεωρία 140, 173n50, 259
θέωσις 165, 233n71
θρησκεία 155
θυμικόν 264
θυμός 260, 272n41
ἰδέα 129, 132–133, 135–136, 143n17, 143nn26–27
ἴδιος 138
ἰδιότης 211
ἱεράρχης 175n87, 181passim, 191n5
ἱεραρχία 158, 174n61, 189, 191n5, 194n66, 195n80, 196n86
ἱερογραφία 162
ἱερολογία 162
ἱερουργία 155, 162–163, 192n37, 194n62
κάθαρσις 269
καιρός, ἐπιτήδειος 105; *see also* ἐπιτηδειότης
κακία 259, 268
κάλλος 167–168, 183, 192n24
κένωσις 182
κίνησις 109, 146n66, 211, 213, 216n49
κοινωνία 183, 232n57, 232n64
κόσμος 107, 135, 175n81, 177n113
κράσις 231n47
κράτιστον, το 262
κρίσις 265
κτίσμα 139
κτίστης 111
λειτουργία 158
λογισμός 73n25, 267–268, 272n41
Λόγος (and λόγος) 23, 133–134, 138, 141–142, 204, 232n57, 233n69
λύπη 262
μέθεξις 229n9, 230n30, 232n63
μεριστῶς 155
μετάδοσις 163, 194n60
μετάληψις 163, 187
μετεχόμενον 192n35, 231n54
μετέχον 231n54
μετοχή 192n35, 221
μέτοχος 186
μίμημα 132
μίμησις 131, 232n63
μίξις 231n47
μνήμη 263, 266
μοναδικῶς 222
μονάς 174n61
μονογενής 139
μύησις 194n60
μῦθος 131
μυσταγωγία 155
μυστήριον 152, 159, 192n37
νόημα 69, 267, 272n41
νόησις 102, 143n27, 259, 262
νοητός 132, 134, 140–141
νοῦς 110, 132, 137, 143n17, 143nn26–27, 158, 233n74, 260
ὀλίσθημα 26
ὅμοιος 39
ὁμοίωσις 154
ὁμοούσιος 39, 139
ὄν (and μὴ ὄν) 34, 101, 105, 109–110, 113n52, 132, 134, 174n61, 216n49

ὁρατός 132, 134
ὅρεξις 265
ὁρισμός 216n49
οὐρανός 112n12, 177n113
οὐσία 27n8, 33–34, 37, 44n12, 134, 137–138, 146n66, 158, 165, 174n51, 174n61, 194n66, 204, 223, 231n47, 231n53, 232nn57–58, 232n63, 233n73
ὄψις ἀκριβής 262
πάθος 258–260, 263–265, 267
παράγω 243
παραγωγή 153, 171n20, 193n39
παράδειγμα 44n12, 102, 143n17, 233n74
παράδοσις 184
παρακοή 26
παρουσία 98n44
παρρησία 140
πατήρ 138–139, 143n18
πενία παντελής 82
περιγραφή 205, 232n58
περιχώρησις 231n44
πίστις 33–34
πλάσις 134
ποιητής 109, 138
ποιότης 231n47
πονηρός 52
πραγματεία 192nn33 and 37
πρακτική 268–269
προβολή 263
πρόειμι 243
προέρχομαι 243
πρόνοια 240
πρόοδος 183, 193n39
προορισμοί 244, 254n18
προπάθεια 267
προσφάτως 100, 106, 108
ῥοπή 271n10
σάρξ 260, 264
σοφία 134
στάσιμος ταὐτοκινησία 246
συγκεφαλαίωσις 160
συλλειτουργός 193n45
συμβεβηκός 164, 230n30
σύμβολον 192n37
συμμετρία 232n57
συμπλοκή 232n57
συμφυία 231n37
σύναξις 158, 169
συναπτόμενος 141
συνδρομή τῶν ποιοτήτων 69
συνεργία 162, 193n45
σύνθημα 157, 174n51
σχέσις 232n57
σῶμα 264
ταξιαρχία 189
τάξις 54, 174n51, 183–184, 188, 192n30
ταὐτότης 230n33, 233n73
τελείωσις 192n28
τελεσιουργία 160, 174n65, 192n37
τελεταρχία 189
τέλος 260, 262
τέχνη, ἱερατική (θεουργική) 155, 164
τεχνίτης 111
τραπέζωσις, τυπική 152
τριαδικῶς 222
τριάς 174n61
τύπος 134
υἱός 138
ὕλη 63, 134, 155
ὕμνος 162–163, 175n87
ὕπαρξις 189, 222
ὑπερούσιος 158
ὑποδοχή, πρόσφορος 152–153, 156
ὑπόληψις, δοξαστική 262
ὑπόμνησις 268
ὑπόστασις 146n66, 193n39, 231n39
ὑποστάτις 177n121
φαντασία 260, 262–263, 266
φθόνος 271n30
φιλανθρωπία 162, 191n10, 197n105, 227, 232n63, 233n73–74
φιλόθεος 182, 197n105
φιλοσοφία 58n23, 59n37
φύσις 143n17, 202, 206–207, 211, 213, 231n44, 233nn73–74, 266, 272n41
χαρά 137–138
χάρις 165, 228, 233n69, 233n73
χρόνος 111n8, 112n12
χώρα 133
ψυχή 142n2, 143n21, 174n51, 260

Latin words

alpha privativum 82–83, 259
aeternitas 37, 44n12
bona voluntas 277, 285n12
capacitas formae 74n56
causa exemplaris 129, 142
deformatio 135
fides 37
gaudium 279–280, 283, 285nn11–12
gloria 187
habitus 268
impassibilitas 259
iustitia perfecta per gratiam 38
mundus 135
natura 206

persona 206
principium 135
ratio 267
rebus aeternis 37
rebus ortis 37
terminus, a quo, ad quem 109
veritas 37
virtus 135

Syriac words

bīšūtā 268
myattrūtā 268
šūḥlāpē (pl. of šūḥlāpā) 268

Index of passages

I. Scripture

Genesis
1:1 66, 68
1:2a 65–66
1:2c 71
1:26–27 232n67
14:18–20 191n14
Exodus
3:14 22
12:35–36 4
20:20 23
Numbers
23:19 254n6
Deuteronomy
6:4 254n6
13:4 23
13:5 19
33:27 254n6
2 Kingdoms [2 Samuel]
6:17–19 23
Psalms
8:5 142n5
90:2 254n6
102:27 254n6
Ecclesiastes
7:25 118
Sirach [Ecclesiasticus]
1:1 24
Isaiah
9:6 96n100
40:28 254n6
54:11 24
54:12 24
Jeremiah
5:8 23
Haggai
2:6 24
Malachi
2:7 196
Matthew
10:30 142n6
Luke
12:7 142n6
John
1:14 147n81
10:30 41
14:6 146n67
14:19 175n81
17:14 and 16 144n46
Acts
17:23 171n19
17:32 275
17:34 191n4
Romans
1:19 24
4:5 41
4:13 39
1 Corinthians
3:9 193n45
8:6 139
9:20–22 171n16
13:12 255n22
15:24–28 40
Galatians
5:26 24
5:30–31 229
Ephesians
6:12 19
Colossians
1:18 229
1 Timotheus [Timothy]
2:5 40
Hebrews
2:4 40
2:6 142n5
4:14 196n93
5:5 196n93

5:5–6 196n94
7:1–28 191n14
7:12 45n30
7:24 45n30
10:1 227
1 John
1:5 226
1:7 226, 232n64
4:8–9 195n74
4:19 195n74
Revelation
2:1 and 8 196n99
4:4 and 8 194n65
5:6 194n65

II. Other Authors

Aeneas of Gaza
Theophrastus
175.2–9 74n58

Alexander of Aphrodisias
De anima liber cum mantissa
39.4–5 271n36
De mixtione
216.28–31 231n47

Ambrose
Exameron
1.2.5 73n19
1.7.25 73n21
2.1.1 73n22

Ammonius
In Porphyrii Isagogen
10–20 215n9

Aristotle
Categoriae
5 96n2
5, 2a13 215n23
6, 6a17–18 96n2
De anima
3.4, 429a13–18 143n28
Ethica Nicomachea
2.1, 1103a14–1103b25 272n44
2.5.1–2, 1105b21–24 271n29
10.4.4, 1174b14 271n25
10.4.8, 1174b31–33 271n26
10.7.1–3, 1177a12–27 271n8
10.7.9, 1178a 6–7 271n16
Metaphysica
Z 3, 1029a10–19 73n29
Λ 7, 1072b14 97n20
Λ 9, 1074b33–34 143n27
Λ 9, 1074b34–35 146n75
Physica
3, 6 111n9
Politica
1453b11 233n70

Athanasius
Contra Arianos
1.15–16 147n79
2.5.2–3 146n78
2.57 147n79
2.82.1, 1–5 147n80
3.1 147n79
Contra Gentes
2 147nn89–90, 147n92, 147n94
3 147n88
46–47 147n79
De decretis
22 147n82
De incarnatione verbi
8.1 147n93
De synodis
35 147n83

Athenagoras
Legatio pro Christianis
6.1–4 27n21
7.2 29n83, 30n108
12.2 27n22
16.4 27n23
19.2 27n24
23.5–7 27n25
36.3 27n26

Augustine
Confessiones
4.13.20–15.27 127n4
6.16.26 285nn14–16
7.9.13 12n5, 44n2
7.17.23 127n18
8.2.3 142n3
9.5.7 73n24
10.5.5 73n26
10.6.6 73n28, 74n49
10.22.32 285n11
12.8.8 74n49
12.15.19 74n50
12.17.25 74n49

12.17.25–26 74n50
12.19.28 74n49
12.22.31 74n50
Contra academicos
3.20.43 12n11
Contra Faustum Manichaeum
12.45 35, 45n23
22.27 38
32.2 44n18
32.3 44n18
De civitate Dei
4.32.2 41
8 33
8.5 12n2, 27n13, 33
8.11 29nn92, 29n94, 29n96, 142n3
9 33
10 33
10.9.2 41
10.23 41
10.18 41
12.7 73n27
13.16.1 44n10
14.2 286n20
22.19 74n49
22.26 44n10
De consensu evangelistarum
1 35
1.7.10 35
1.7.11 35
1.9.14 35
1.15.23 36
1.20.28 36
1.30.46 36
1.35.53 34–35, 42, 44n9
1.35.54 38
9.14 44n17
11.17 44n17
De doctrina christiana
2.28.43 46n41
De libero arbitrio
1 96n11
1.12.25 285n5
1.13.29 285n12
2 123–126
2.11.30 127n17
2.11.32 125
De musica
6.14.44 127n10
De ordine
1.1.1–1.2.3 96n11, 120
1.2.3 127n6
2.18.47–2.19.51 127n11
De praedestinatione sanctorum
4.8 45n27
De trinitate
1 39, 44n7
1.1 39
1.1.3 39
1.3.17 40
4 40
4.1.4 40
4.1.5 41
4.1.24 45n32
4.2.11 41, 45n36
4.2.12 45n36
4.3.13 46n40
4.3.17 41
4.4.20 41
4.5.25 43
4.18.24 34–35, 39, 42–43, 44n9
13.4.7 285n7
13.7.10 286n18
13.8 282, 285–286n17
Epistulae
3.2 127n8
Retractationes
2.16 44n13

Basil the Great
Epistulae
38 215n14
214 215n15, 230n16
Homiliae in Hexaëmeron
1.3 112n41
1.6 111n1
1.8.3–4 73n31
2.2.2 73n14
2.2.2 113n63
2.2.4–5 73n15
2.2.6–7 73n16
2.2.8 73n17

Cicero
De natura deorum
3.39.92 74n62
Timaeus
3.8.1–2 44n11

Clement of Alexandria
Paedagogus
1.67.1–2 29n86
2.10.89 29n87, 29n91
2.18.1 28n34
2.22.1 28n35
2.100.3–4 29n88

Protrepticus
9.87 232n67
68.3–4 29n85
70.1 28n29, 29n89
74.7 30n109
Stromateis
1.42.1 23
1.5.28 28n44
1.9.4 28n36
1.66.3 28n29, 29n89
1.94.2 29n84
1.165.2 28n38
2.18.2 29n92
2.100.4 28n39
2.133.2 29n90
4.25.155.2 144n40
5.14.39.3 144n41
5.14.93.3 144n42
5.14.93.5–94.4 144n42
5.5 24
5.29.3–6 29n97
5.89.4 30n114
5.90.2 30n115
5.90.3 30n116
5.92.1–4 28n30
5.92.5–6 28n31
5.93.2–3 28n37
5.93.4 19
5.102.3 29n93
5.103 12n6
5.103.1 28n32
5.103.2–4 28n33
5.106.2 28n41
5.108.2–3 28n42
6 19
6.42.3 28n43
6.67.1 28n44
6.7.55.4 30n109, 30n113

Constantine the Great
Oratio ad sanctorum coetus
9.3 27n11

David
In Porphyrii Isagogen
18.149.6–11 97n33

Diadochus of Photice
De perfectione spirituali
89, 1203c–d 232n67

Diogenes Laertius
Vitae philosophorum
2.7 112n40
3.6 29n95
3.37 171n17
3.46 171n17

Dionysius the Areopagite
De caelesti hierarchia
1.3, 9.9 193n45
2.1, 9.16 193n46
2.2, 11.4 196n86
3.1, 17.3–9 192n23
3.1, 17.5 192n38
3.2, 18.2 193n46
3.2, 18.3–6 193n47
3.2, 18.5–7 193n48
3.2, 18.10–13 192n20
3.2, 18.11 192n30, 194n56
3.2, 18.15 192n38
3.2, 18.16 193n45
3.2, 18.17–19.2 192n29
3.3, 19.9–14 194n58
3.3, 19.12–14 194n59
3.3, 19.19 194n60
3.3, 19.20–21 194n60
3.3, 19.21 192n30
3.3, 19.21–20.2 194n53
3.3, 19.22 193n45
3.3, 19.23–20.1 194n55
4.1, 20.11–19 195n77
4.3, 22.19 196n88
4, 22.25–23.5 174n64
4.4, 24.1–4 196n100
6.1, 26.1–2 195n66
6.1, 26.5–6 195n66
6.1, 27.8–9 194n66
7.2, 28.15–17 192n36
7.2, 28.20–23 192n32
7.2, 29.19 196n86
7.2, 29.24 196n87
7.3, 30.22–31.5 195n68
8.1, 33.4 196n90
8.1, 33.22 196n89
8.2, 34.25–35.3 196n101
8.2, 35.21–25 195n81
9.2, 36.12–14 and 24 192n30
9.2, 37.3–11 196n83
9.2, 37.10–13 192n26
9.3, 38.15 and 17 197n105
9.3, 38.16–20 191n14
10.2, 40.16 and 18 192n30
10.3, 40.23–41.4 195n77
11.2, 42.1–2 192n27
11.2, 42.7–8 196n88
12.1, 42.15 196n100
12.3, 43.12–19 196n99
13.3, 45.20 192n38
13.3, 46.1–5 194n53

13.3, 46.19–21 196n101
13.4, 48.22–49.2 196n101
13.4, 49.8–10 196n101
15.1, 50.13–51.1 197n104
De divinis nominibus
1.4, 114.7–115.5 176n104, 255n22
1.5, 117.15 193n39
1.6, 118.11–119.1 195n74
2.6, 130 232n59
2.9, 134.1–2 195n76
2.11, 136.3 193n39
3.2, 139.17–18 195n75
3.2, 140.3–4 193n44
5.8, 188.8 254n18
11.5, 221.5–10 175n75
De ecclesiastica hierarchia
1.1 170n2
1.1, 63.12–64.1 196n95
1.1, 63.12–64.4 174n60
1.1, 63.3 195n80
1.2, 65.20–21 195n95
1.3, 65.22–24 192n20
1.3, 66.1–6 191n15
1.3, 66.6–9 174n61
1.3, 66.12–13 233n71
1.3, 66.14–15 193n41
1.5, 67.17 196n85
1.5, 67.19–20 193n41
2.1, 69.7 197n103
2.1, 69.9–12 216n58
2.2, 70.2–3 196n99
2.2, 70.11 193n41
2.3, 75.3–9 191n15
2.3, 75.4–7 194n52
3, 79.1–94.22 174n54
3, 79.8 192n37
3, 79.10 192n37
3, 79.13 192n37
3, 79.15 192n37
3, 79.17 192n37
3, 79.19 192n37
3, 80.1 192n37
3, 80.5–6 195n66
3.3, 83.3–10 191n15
3.4, 83.12 192n37
3.4, 84.1–6 175n77
3.5, 84.18 and 21 174n65
3.5, 84.18–21 174n65
3.8, 88.10 191n10
3.10, 90.9–10 175n87
3.12, 92.3–4 192n37
4.1, 20.9–11 171n20
4, 95.17 192n37
4, 95.19 192n37
4.12, 103.2–4 194n62
4.12, 103.16–18 194n62
4.12, 103.21–22 194n62
5.1, 104.11–15 192n34
5.1, 105.3–106.3 195n77
5.3, 106.17–22 194n63
5.4, 106.24–25 194n54
5.5, 107.16–17 196n95
5.5, 112.8–15 196n94
5.6, 113.10–12 193n41
6.5, 119.8–15 195n79
7.7, 127.16–18 196n100
7a, 130.10 193n41
Epistulae
4 230n31, 231n42
4, 161.5–10 171n11, 174n62
4, 161.9 196n96
8.2, 180.12–16 173n42
8.3–4, 182.3–184.2 195n77
9.1, 198.3–5 171n10, 175n78
9.2, 200.5–8 196n91

Elias
In Aristotelis Categorias
5, 179.1–13 97n33
In Porphyrii Isagogen
85.14–17 97n33

Epiphanius
Adversus haereses
51.8 44n16

Eusebius of Caesarea
Historia ecclesiastica
6.24.3 28n46
Praeparatio evangelica
4.5.4 58n15
4.6.2 59n35
4.7.1 59n38
4.8.1 59n39
4.10.1 58n28
4.15.1 59n29
4.19.1–2 51
4.19.8–20.1 51
4.22.1–4 51
4.22.5–9 51
4.22.10–12 51
4.23.1–5 51
4.23.6 51
4.23.7–9 51
6.1.1 59n37
7.20 73n2
7.20–21 74n61
7.20.1 73n3
7.20.2 73n6
7.20.3 73n7

7.20.4 73n8
7.20.5 73n9
7.20.6 73n10
7.20.6–7 65
7.20.7 73n11
11 29n105
11.1.3–5 27n12
11.4 29n75
11.5 29n76
11.5–6 28n55
11.6 20
11.7–38 28n56
11.10.14 28n60
11.10.15 28n61
11.12 20
11.13 29n62
11.13.5 29n106
11.14 29n63, 29n77
11.24 29n71
11.26 29n64
11.32 29n65
11.33 29n66
12.1–13.11 28n57
12.8 29n72
12.18 29n67
12.20 29n73
12.25 29n74
12.31 28n53
12.34 29n78
12.35 29n68
12.40–41 29n69
13.1 29n70
13.14 30n121
13.14–21 26
13.14.2 30n111
13.16.18 30n120

Evagrius
De malignis cogitationibus
2 272n38
17 260
De octo spiritibus malitiae
11 271n34
De oratione
35 271n8
86 271n8
110 271n15
Epistula ad Anatolium
18.61 232n67
Epistula ad Melaniam
62 232n67
Gnosticus
44 269
45 272n45
Practicus
4 271n33
34 272n37
35 271n32
52 271n20
74–75 272n42
89 269
Scholia in Iob
9.32–33 271n35
Scholia in Proverbia
4 271n35
Tractatus ad Eulogium
23 271n31

Gregory of Nazianzus
Epistulae
101 230n37
Oratio
31.14 230n15

Gregory of Nyssa
Ad Ablabium
40.24–41 215n18
53.7–15 215n21
De anima et resurrectione
124b–d 74n38
De hominis opificio
24 74n38
Epistulae
38 204
In Hexaemeron
7 73nn35–37

Hippolytus
Refutatio omnium haeresium
1.19 27n8
6.21.1–3 29n94
6.3 27n8
10.32.4 27n8

Iamblichus
De anima
23 96n6
De mysteriis
1.9 232nn57–58
1.18 232n55
1.19 232n56
1.21, 14 175n85
3.11, 124.14–125.6 173n40
3.11, 125.4–5 172n32
3.24–25, 157.12–14 172n32
3.27, 165.7–10 172n32
4.8, 192.1–3 172n32
5.10, 210.11–12 172n32
5.18–19, 225.1–4 173n48, 177n116
5.23, 233.9–13 173n43
6.6, 246.12–247.2 174n51
10.3, 287.15–288.1 172n32

Irenaeus
Adversus haereses
2.3.1 147n86
2.6.3 147n86
2.20.1 147n86
2.20.2 147n86
2.42.2 147n87
4.34.1 147n86

Jerome
Apologia contra Rufinum
1.18 28n50
Dialogus contra Pelagianos
1 28n48
Epistulae
70.4 28n48
133 271n6

John Lydus
De mensibus
175.2–9 74n58

John of Damascus
De fide orthodoxa
1.8 146n66, 230n18
Liber de haeresibus
5.52 215n32

Justin Martyr
Apologia
1.8.4 27n15
1.13.3 27n19
1.18.5 27n16
1.20.4, 1–2 44n5
1.24.1 18
1.44.9 29n79
1.46 29n81
1.60.1 12n7, 27n17, 29n80
1.60.1–7 29n80, 30n112
1.60.7 27n19
2.7.1–2 29n82
2.10.5–6 27n20
2.10.7 29n107
2.10.8 29n82
2.13.3–5 29n82
Dialogus cum Tryphone
2.3–6 27n9
2.6 27n10

Lactantius
Divinae institutiones
4.13.17 44n19

Lucan
De bello civili
2.592–593 45n24

Maximus the Confessor
Ambigua ad Iohannem
7 147n95
7.12 232n61
7.21 233n68
7.22 232n62
7, 1069b 216n46
7, 1073b 255n32
7, 1076a–b 256n50
7, 1077a–b 255n28
7, 1077a–d 255n23
7, 1077c 113n52
7, 1081a 112n32
7, 1081a–b 113n53
7, 1085a 254n18
7, 1085b 254n11
7, 1085b–c 254n16
7, 1088a 255n24
7, 1089b 255n28
7, 1089c 255n26
10.9 233n74
10.39 230n26
10, 1167d–1188c 113n54
10, 1176d–1177b 113n58
10, 1177a 113n59
10, 1177b–1181a 113n60
16 216n42
17 216n42
17.5 231n41
20, 1237b 216n65
21.15 227, 233n69
22 216n42
23.4 230n16
41.5 232n65, 233nn72–73
41, 1312c–d 216n54
41, 1312c–e 216n53
48.7 232n65
53.3 232n65
67.10 230n26
Ambigua ad Thomam
1.3 230nn19, 230n21
1, 1036c 254n10
2, 1037c–d 216n44
4.8 230n32, 231n39
5.1 230n31
5.11 230n34
5.14 231n45
5.17 231n43
5.24 230n32
5, 1048a–b 216n47, 216nn51–52, 216n56
5, 1049c–d 216n55
5, 1052c 216n64
Capita de caritate
1.23–32, 965a–968a 255n37
2.29 230nn22–23

3.25 233n68
3.29 231n38
4.3, 1048c 112n34
4.3–5, 1048c–d 112n35
4.4, 1048d 112n33
4.5, 1048d 111n2, 112n51
Capita theologica et oeconomica
1.1 254n7
1.7 255n41
1.9 256n49
1.10 254n8
1.31 255n40
1.48–50 232n66
1.70 255n22
1.83 254n7
2.1 230n24, 254n7
2.36 255n42
Disputatio cum Pyrrho
192 231n44
Epistulae
12, 469a–b 216n43
12, 473c–d 216n62
13, 517a–d 217n68
15, 552c 230n33
15, 549c–d 230n20
Expositio orationis dominicae
2 230n27
4 239nn28–30
Mystagogia
3, 672a 177n113
5 255n27, 256n48
23–24 255n33
24 233n72, 233n74
Opuscula theologica et polemica
1, 33b7–12 217n66
5, 64a–65a 230n36
16, 200b8–c15 216n49
Quaestiones ad Thalassium
8 230n25
8.2 232n63
25.5 233n72
28.5 230n26
40.8 232n65
53.3 and 6 233n68
59.8 233n72
65.544–547 255n30

Numenius
Fragmenta
52 (44–50) 79, 96n6

Origen
Commentarium in Epistolam ad Romanos
1.19 29n103
Commentarium in Evangelium Matthaei
14.9 145n50
Commentarium in Iohannem
1.19, 114–116 144n42
2.17 230n12
2.18 230n13
20.157 146n68
32.350 146n65, 147n80
Contra Celsum
1.28 36
1.68 36
3.47 29n103
3.81.1–4 142n2
4.30 29n103
4.39 29n94, 29n96, 29n102, 29n121
4.54.11–16 145n52
4.85 29n98
5.20–21 20
5.43 20
5.56 35
6.3–4 20–21
6.6 21
6.7 21, 30n118
6.10 21
6.12–13 21
6.15 21, 30n118
6.17–19 21
6.19 21, 29nn101, 30n118
6.21 21
6.32 30n118
6.58 21
6.63 144n42
6.64 146n74
6.64.25–28 145n51
7.16 146n67
7.30 21, 29n100, 30n117
7.31 21
7.51 30n110
8.12 146n67
De principiis
1.3.3–4 229n10
1.3.6 29n98
1.4.4–5 229n10
2.1.1 73n12
2.1.2 29n99
2.3 145n49
2.3.6 144n47, 145n48
2.4.1 74n61
2.8.2–4 147n91
2.9.2 229n10
2.9.6 29n99
3.6.4 74n61
3.6.7 74n61
4.4.1 229n10

4.4.7 73n5, 73n25, 74n47
Dialogus cum Heraclide
11.19–20 144n42
Homiliae in Genesim
1.1 144n44
1.2 144n42
Homiliae in Numeris
18.3 29n104

Philip of Sidè
Historia christiana
1.1–9 28n28

Philo of Alexandria
De migratione Abrahae
18.103 143n35, 145n51, 146n74
De opificio mundi
4.16 143nn30–31, 143n36
5.20 143n34
6.23 74n61
6.25 143n35, 146n74
7.29 143n36
23.69 143n35, 144n42
46.134 144n42
De providentia
2.50–51 74n61
Legum allegoriae
3.33 144n38
Quod Deus sit immutabilis
24 144n38

Philoponus, John
Arbitrator
21–22 215n32
32 216n45
45 216n40
De aeternitate mundi contra Proclum
24 112n14
33–36 112n15, 112n18
36–37 112n16, 112n19
40 112n20
42–43 112n22
46–47 112n24
55–56 112n25
63 112n26
64 112n28
78 112n29
79 112n30
119 112n37
235 112n38
236 112n39, 113n61
552 112n31
566 112n49
618–620 112n50
In Aristotelis Categorias commentarium
58, 19–21 215n34, 216n39
67, 31–34 215n33

Photius of Constantinople
Bibliotheca
cod. 48 27n8

Plato
Crito
46b 23
Epinomis
987de 153, 171n17
Epistulae
2, 312de 18
2, 312e–313a 21
6, 322cd 21
7, 326bc 19
7, 341c 21
7, 341cd 20–21
7, 341d 21
7, 344b 21
Gorgias
477a 9
523c–524a 18
Leges
636d8–e3 261
715e–716a 21
715–716b 25
742e 19
761a 23
903e 254n13
906a 19, 25
Parmenides
129b–c 231n49
131b–c 231n51
Phaedo
69bc 269
78a 23
109–110 21
109b 24, 26
109b–110de 21
109de 21
Phaedrus
222e1 193n41
247–248 21
247c 21
248ce 21
254ce 23
279bc 19
Philebus
15a–b 45n38
16ce 45n38
17ce 45n38

38a–39c 263
47e–48a 263
48b–50a 271n30
Politicus
269d 18
Respublica
361e4–a1 19
369–372 20
379c 96n4
389b 20
427–434 20
501a9 195n71
511d4 195n71
514a1–518b5 191n12
616b 19
617e 96n4
Sophista
247d8–e4 216n59
Symposium
206d 97n39, 98n45
Theaetetus
173a4–8 191n11
176 96n4
176a 95
176b 19, 23
Timaeus
17a1–2 191n19
17a1–3 142n11
22d 21
27d 18
27d–28a 22, 111n7, 113n55
28bc 113n56
28c 18, 23
29a2–3 143n15
29a3 143n24
29b4–c3 34
29c3 33–36, 38–39, 42–43, 44n4
29e–30a 96n4
29e1–3 143n19
30a 113n57
30a6–7 193n48
30ab 113n62
30b 79
30c 112n17
31b4–32c4 45n26
31c2–3 45n26
31c4–32a7 45n26
37a 143n22
37a1 143n23
37a1–2 143n21
37c6–d1 143n18
37d1 143n25
37d1–2 143n16
39e 143n27
39e6–9 143n17
39e7–8 143n26
40de 18
41a 18
41ab 44n10
41d–42e 21
42ab 271n29
42e7–8 143n20
45a 79
48d6 142n12
52b 73nn25–26
55d5 142n13

Plotinus
First Ennead
1.1 91
1.1.1–4 271n21
1.1.7–11 97n37
1.1.11, 1–2 91
1.2 269–270
1.2.5, 22–32 270
1.6.2 74n57
1.7.3, 6–8 85
1.8 81
1.8.2, 2–3 82
1.8.2, 2–6 82
1.8.3, 8 74n57
1.8.3, 13–17 82
1.8.3, 22–25 97n22
1.8.4 91
1.8.4, 1–6 97n27
1.8.4, 6–12 88
1.8.4, 15–32 88
1.8.4, 20–21 98n44
1.8.5, 5–8 92
1.8.5, 21–26 97n35
1.8.5, 22 89
1.8.6 78, 96n2
1.8.6, 38–41 96n2
1.8.7, 16–22 98n46
1.8.8, 3–9 98n43
1.8.8, 10–11 90
1.8.8, 16 90
1.8.8, 18–24 90
1.8.14, 42 98n44
1.8.14, 44–49 97n40
1.8.14, 49 91
1.8.14, 54 98n44
1.8.30–31 92
Second Ennead
2.4 85
2.4.5 74n57
2.4.11 86
2.4.11, 1–8 74n42
2.4.11, 4–13 86
2.4.11, 17–19 86

2.4.11, 26–27 86
2.4.11, 42 86
2.4.12, 1–7 87
2.5.5 74n57
2.9 173n44
Third Ennead
3.2 87, 96n11
3.2.1, 21–22 146n64
3.2.1, 27–35 97n34
3.2–3 97n36
3.3 96n11
3.6 89, 270
3.6.1–5 89
3.6.13 75n57
3.6.17, 12 86
3.6.18 86
3.8 146n63
3.8.2, 20–34 94
Fourth Ennead
4.2.1, 11–17 97n31
4.2.1, 36–41 97n31
4.3–5 89
4.3.5, 10 142n7, 146n60
4.3.13 and 24 254n13
4.8.8, 2 97n38
Fifth Ennead
5.1.10, 11 97n38
5.3.5, 23 145n58
5.3.5, 26–29 146n58
5.3.5, 43–44 146n58
5.3.5, 45–46 146n58
5.3.6, 8 146n58
5.3.7, 19–20 146n58
5.5 142n8
5.5.1, 3–4 145n56
5.5.1, 14–15 145n59
5.5.1, 17–21 145n57
5.5.9, 24–26 146n61
Sixth Ennead
6.2.20 216n61
6.4–5 97n21, 231n51
6.4.1, 17–26 97n31
6.4.11, 3–4 173n37
6.4.15 173n42
6.4.15, 1–6 173n37
6.4.15, 12–13 173n37
6.5.5 127n6
6.6.1 45n38
6.8 80
6.9.8 127n6

Plutarch
De anima procreatione in Timaeo
1014b 96n5

Porphyry
Ad Marcellam
21 58n20
De abstinentia
1.27 54
1.27.1 59n30
1.29.4 260, 271n11
1.29.5–6 272n45
1.30–32 261
1.30.2 271n10
1.30.6–7 271n9
1.31.1 271n12
1.33.2–6 271n22
1.34.7 271n28
2.3.1 54
2.36.5 59n29
2.37 55
2.38–39 51
2.38–40 56
2.38–42 51, 53, 55
2.38–43 58n20
2.40–41 51
2.40.2 59n32, 59n34
2.42.2–3 55, 59n31
2.43 51, 54–55
2.45 54–55
2.52 51
3.27 74n57
In Ptolemaei Harmonica
13.19–14.14 271n23
Isagoge
1.10–15 215n7
6.19–25 215n17
Philosophia ex oraculis (Smith)
303F 56–57, 59n38
304F 59n39
307F 52–53, 56, 58nn18–19
308F–309F 52
314F 54–55, 58n23, 58n27
315F 53–55
318F 56
326F–329F 51
326F 52, 58n17, 58n21
327F 52, 58n21
329F 52, 58n21
331F 59n37
343F–346F 51
345F 45n22
346F 58n21
347F 55
Sententiae
1 271n27
4 271n10
8–9 271n19
11.37 45n38

15 263
20 74n57
30 74n57
32 269, 271n8, 272n47
Vita Plotini
10.22–25 54
10.28–29 54

Proclus
De malorum subsistentia
30–37 97n12
31.18–21 97n15
32 97n14
In Alcibiadem
90.23 194n51
125.2 192n21
328.11–13 192n24
In Parmenidem
754 231n48
Institutio Theologica
2 231n52
6 254n2
8 255n39
9 231n53
18 231n54
23–24 232n54, 232n 66
25–39 191n8
38 147n94
50 254n4
52 146n61
65 196n91
66–74 232n56
75 232n55
77 232n55
78 232n55
81 146n63
114 230n13
122 194nn51, 194n55, 255nn35–36
167 254n17
176 231n176
In Timaeum
232.21 145n54
277 111n7
278 111n8
281 113n12, 113n52
282 111n11
322.24 145n55
382.5–7 96n5
391.4–396.26 74n53
392.8 74n54
398–399 113n64
Theologia Platonica
1.302.23–24 193n39
4.43.19 193n40
4.64.24 193n40
4.77.20 193n40
6.3 233n71
6.23.2 194n51

Ps.-Cyril
De Sacrosancta trinitate
10 230n18

Ps.-Justin
Cohortatio ad graecos
20.1 29n94

Ps.-Plutarch
De Homero
2.145 127n5

Seneca
De ira
2.2.1 267

Simplicius
In Aristotelis Categorias commentarium
80, 1–10 216n37
83.1, 13–15 215n36
In Aristotelis Physicorum libros quattuor priores commentaria
230.34–231.24 74n58

Tatian
Oratio ad graecos
2–3 27n4

Tertullian
Apologeticum
21.17 44n19
De anima
54.2 27n7

Themistius
Paraphrasis in libros Aristotelis de anima
78.10–11 271n36

Theodoretus of Cyrrhus
Graecarum affectionum curatio
2.26 29n94

Theophilus
Ad Autolycum
2.4 27n5
3.7 27n6

Index of persons

I. Ancient, Byzantine and Medieval

Aeneas of Gaza 74n58, 100, 111nn3–4
Alcinoos (Alcinous/Albinus) 21, 27n8
Alexander of Aphrodisias 111, 155, 172n34, 231n47, 265, 271n36
Ambrose of Milan 66, 73n19, 73nn21–22, 100
Amelius 21
Ammonius, son of Hermeias 203, 215n9
Ammonius Saccas 152
Antiochus of Ascalon 136, 145n53
Apollinarius of Laodicaea 215n16
Apuleius 33, 44n20, 46nn39–40, 127n1
Aquinas, Thomas 112n21, 194n64, 196n97
Aristotle 20, 26, 68–69, 73n29, 94, 96n2, 97n20, 103, 107, 111n9, 112n48, 132–133, 143nn27–28, 146n75, 151, 194n57, 202–203, 207, 212, 215n23, 225, 227, 233n70, 260, 262, 264–265, 268, 271nn8, 271n16, 271nn24–26, 271n29, 272n44, 278–279
Arius 133, 142
Arius Didymus 279
Athanasius of Alexandria 8, 111, 113n67, 130, 138–141, 146n78, 147nn79–80, 147nn82–83, 147nn88–90, 147nn92–94
Athenagoras 18–19, 22–23, 25, 27nn20–28, 28n28, 29n83, 30n108
Atticus 21, 71, 142n9, 144n37
Augustine of Hippo 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 12n2, 12n5, 12nn10–11, 17, 27n13, 29n92, 29n94, 29n96, 33–43, 44n1, 44nn3–4, 44n7, 44nn 9–10, 44nn12–13, 44nn15–16, 44n18, 45n21, 45nn26–27, 45n29, 45nn32–33, 45n38, 46nn39–42, 66–68, 71–72, 73n24, 73nn26–28, 74nn49–51, 74n59, 95, 96n11, 100, 117–127, 127nn1–2, 127n4, 127nn6–11, 127nn13–14, 127nn16–18, 129, 142n2, 275–284, 284nn2–4, 285nn4–7, 285nn11–12, 285nn14–16, 286n20

Basil of Caesarea (the Great) 65–66, 68–70, 72, 73nn14–17, 73n31, 73n34, 95, 100, 107, 110, 111n1, 112n41, 113n63, 171n18, 204, 206, 215nn13–16, 230n16

Calcidius 68, 73n26, 74n59
Celsus 25–26, 35, 45n29, 129
Cicero, Marcus Tullius 33, 35, 37–38, 44nn9–12, 74n62
Clement of Alexandria 4, 6, 8, 12n6, 18–20, 22–26, 28nn29–44, 29nn84–93, 29n97, 30n109, 30nn113–116, 133–136, 144nn40–42, 152, 155, 232n67
Constantine the Great, Emperor 17, 27n11, 49
Cornutus 20
Cyril of Alexandria 21

Damascene, John *see* John of Damascus
David, King (Prophet) 23
David, philosopher (in Alexandria) 97n33
Diadochus of Photice 232n67
Didymus the Blind 267
Diogenes Laertius 21, 28n59, 29n95, 107, 112n40, 171n17
Dionysius the Areopagite 8–9, 96, 151–154, 156, 158–169, 170nn1–3, 170n6, 171nn9–11, 171n13, 171n18, 171n20, 172nn20–21, 172n23, 172n27, 172n30, 173n42, 173n50, 174nn53–54, 174nn60–62, 174nn64–65, 175n75, 175nn77–78, 175n83, 175n87, 176nn96–97, 176n102, 176n110, 176n113, 177n113, 177n115, 177n119, 177n121, 181–190, 191n4, 191n6,

191n10, 191nn13–14, 191n16, 192n20, 192nn22–23, 192n26, 192nn28–29, 192n34, 192n36, 193n39, 193nn41–43, 193n45, 193nn47–48, 194n52, 194n55, 194nn59–60, 194n62, 194n64, 194n66, 195nn68–69, 195n74, 195nn76–77, 195n79, 196nn83–86, 196nn92–94, 196n97, 196n103, 197n103, 201, 212–213, 216nn57–58, 216n61, 223–224, 226, 228, 230n31, 231n42, 232n55, 232n59, 233n71, 239, 254n2, 254n18, 255n22

Elias, philosopher (in Alexandria) 97n33
Epiphanius of Salamis 35, 44n16
Eusebius of Caesarea 4–6, 17, 20–22, 24–26, 27n12, 28n46, 28n53, 28nn55–57, 28nn60–1, 29nn62–78, 29nn105–106, 30n111, 30nn120–121, 49–57, 58n15, 58n22, 58n28, 59n29, 59nn35–36, 59n38, 64, 73nn2–3, 73nn6–11, 74n61
Evagrius Ponticus (of Pontus) 10, 230n15, 232n67, 258–261, 264–270, 270n2, 270n4, 271n8, 271n15, 271n17, 271n20, 271nn31–36, 272nn37–38, 272n42, 272n45

Gregory of Nazianzus (Theologian) 220–221, 230n15, 230n37
Gregory of Nyssa 69–70, 72, 73nn35–37, 74n38, 95, 100, 172n23, 204–206, 208, 215n13, 215n18, 215n21, 230n17
Gregory Palamas *see* Palamas, Gregory

Hippolytus of Rome 17, 27n8, 29n94

Iamblichus 49, 96n6, 151–157, 161–167, 169, 172n21, 172n30, 172n32, 173n38, 173nn40–43, 173n46, 173n48, 173n50, 174nn51–53, 174n65, 175n85, 175n88, 176n102, 177nn116–117, 182, 192n37, 216n61, 225, 232nn55–58

Jerome 20, 28n48, 28n50, 44n20
John Lydus 74n58
John of Damascus 146n66, 215n32, 221, 230n18
John Philoponus 8, 100–108, 110, 111n6, 112nn14–16, 112nn18–20, 112n22, 112nn242–6, 112nn28–31, 112nn37–39, 112nn45–6, 112nn48–50, 113n61, 172n20, 173n36, 202, 207–209, 211–212, 214, 215nn30–34, 216nn39–40, 216n45, 254n15, 255n20
John the Evangelist 227
John the Baptist 227
Justin Martyr 6, 12n7, 17–19, 22–23, 25, 27nn9–10, 27nn14–17, 27nn19–20, 29nn79–82, 29n107, 30n112, 33, 44n5

Longinus 130, 136, 145n55
Lucan 36, 38, 45n24
Luther, Martin 170n3

Maximus the Confessor 8–10, 100, 102–103, 105–110, 111n2, 112nn32–35, 113nn51–54, 113nn58–60, 147n95, 155, 168, 172n20, 173n35, 175n93, 176n113, 177n113, 183, 192n22, 201–203, 205–206, 209–214, 215n3, 215n28, 216nn42–51, 216nn53–57, 216nn61–62, 216nn64–65, 217n66, 217n68, 220–224, 226–229, 230nn19–30, 230nn32–37, 231nn37–9, 231nn43–45, 232nn61–63, 232nn65–66, 233nn68–70, 233nn72–5, 239–254, 254nn7–8, 254nn10–11, 254nn15–16, 254n18, 255n20, 255nn22–28, 255n30, 255nn32–33, 255n37, 255nn40–42, 255n45, 256nn48–50

Nicomachus of Gerasa 46n39, 127n1
Numenius 20–21, 68, 79, 96n6

Origen 4, 8, 20–22, 24–26, 28n45, 28n48, 29n94, 29n96, 29nn98–104, 30n110, 30nn117–118, 30n121, 35–36, 44n15, 64–65, 67–68, 70, 72, 73n5, 73n9, 73n25, 74n47, 74n61, 129, 134–138, 140, 142n2, 144nn42–45, 144n47, 145nn48–52, 146n65, 146nn67–68, 146n74, 146n78, 147n80, 147n91, 168, 221, 229n10, 230nn11–13, 230n15, 267

Palamas, Gregory 194n64, 252–253, 256n47
Parmenides 112n13
Pelagius 39
Philip of Sidè 28n28
Philippus of Opus 171n17
Philo of Alexandria 8, 74n61, 132–134, 136, 140, 143nn30–31, 143nn34–36, 144nn37–38, 144n42, 145n51, 146n74
Philoponus *see* John Philoponus
Photius 27n8
Plato 5–8, 17–26, 27n8, 29n92, 29n96, 33–34, 36–39, 41–43, 45n38, 46n41, 65–68, 73n25, 79, 94–95, 96n4, 97n39,

98n45, 101, 107, 109–110, 111n7, 112n17, 113nn55–57, 113n62, 129–135, 140, 142n3, 142nn11–13, 143nn14–26, 143n31, 153–154, 161, 167, 171n17, 176n102, 186, 191n11, 191n19, 193n41, 193n48, 194n57, 202–203, 212–213, 216n59, 231n49, 231n51, 243, 254n13, 260–261, 263–265, 267, 269–270
Plotinus 5, 7–8, 10, 12n10, 17, 21–22, 28n45, 45n38, 49–50, 68, 70–71, 73n26, 74n43, 74n51, 74n57, 78–95, 96n2, 96nn10–12, 97n12, 97n22, 97n25, 97n27, 97n30, 97nn32–35, 97n40, 98n43, 98nn45–6, 111, 120–121, 124–126, 130, 136–137, 142nn7–8, 145nn55–58, 146nn59–61, 146n64, 152, 154–157, 160–162, 172n28, 172n30, 172n34, 173n37, 173n42, 173nn44–45, 174n53, 177n117, 181–183, 196n102, 203, 216n61, 225, 231n51, 232n55, 243, 254n13, 255n43, 258–261, 268–270, 271n21, 277
Plutarch of Chaeronea 21, 79, 96n5, 142n9, 144n37
Porphyry of Tyre 5–6, 10, 21–22, 25, 34–36, 38–39, 41, 43, 44n2, 44n16, 44n20, 45n21, 45n29, 45n38, 49–56, 57n1, 58n7, 58n17, 58nn19–24, 58n27, 59nn29–34, 59nn36–39, 71, 73n36, 74nn53–54, 74nn57–59, 79, 85, 145n55, 156, 173n50, 183, 203–205, 215nn7–8, 215n17, 215n19, 225, 258–270, 271nn8–12, 271n14, 271n19, 271nn22–23, 271nn27–28, 272n45, 272n47
Proclus 8–10, 73n36, 74nn53–54, 78, 80–81, 83, 93, 96, 96n5, 96n12, 97n12, 97n14, 100–104, 107–108, 110–111, 111nn7–8, 111n11, 112nn12–14, 112n31, 112n37, 112n47, 113n52, 113n64, 145nn54–55, 146n61, 146n63, 147n94, 153–154, 159, 163, 167, 170, 170n6, 172n20, 172n28, 172n30, 176n102, 177n121, 181–182, 191n17, 192n21, 192n24, 192n35, 193n40, 193n42, 194n51, 194n55, 194n62, 216n61, 225, 230n13, 231n48, 231nn52–54, 232nn54–56, 232n66, 233n71, 239–245, 247–254, 254nn3–4, 254n7, 254n11, 254nn14–15, 254n17, 255n20, 255nn35–36, 255n39, 255n41
pseudo-Cyril 221, 230n18
pseudo-Justin 29n94
pseudo-Plutarch 127n5

Rufinus 135, 136, 145n49

Seneca 267, 272n40
Simplicius of Cilicia 208–209, 214, 215n36, 216n37

Tatian 17, 25, 27n4
Tertullian 17, 27n7, 44n19
Themistius 265, 271n36
Theodoretus of Cyrrhus 29n94
Theophilus of Antioch 17, 25, 27nn5–6

Varro 46n39

William of Moerbeke 97n13

Zacharias of Mytilene 100, 111nn3–4

II. Modern

Abramowski, Luise 231n48
Addey, Crystal 170n1, 170n5, 172n32, 177n17
Alexandre, Monique 74n46
Alfaric, Prosper 44n1
Allen, Pauline 215n3
Andia, Ysabel de 192n26, 195n76
Andreopoulos, Andreas 191n6, 195nn69–70, 195nn72–73
Annas, Julia 278–280, 283, 285nn8–9
Armstrong, Arthur Hilary 73n32, 74n42, 97n22, 98n44, 168, 176n111
Arthur, Rosemary A. 191n13
Ax, Wilhelm 44n11
Ayres, Lewis 45n32, 45nn35–37, 170n1
Ayroulet, Elie 227, 233n70
Bakhouche, Sabine 74n59
Balás, David L. 230n11, 230n14
Baltes, Mathias 74n53
Balthasar, Hans Urs von 220, 229n1, 270n3
Barnes, Jonathan 215n7, 215n17
Barnes, Michel René 45n33, 45n35
Bathrellos, Demetrios 239–240, 242, 245, 254n1, 254n5, 254n9, 254n12, 254n19, 255n21, 255n24
Beatrice, Pier Franco 44n2, 50, 58n11
Becker, Matthias 44n16, 44n20, 45n22, 50, 58n11, 58n13, 58n16
Beere, Jonathan 216n60, 216n63
Beierwaltes, Werner 142n1
Berg, Robert Maarten van den 173n49, 193n40

Bernard, Wolfgang 271n24
Berthold, George C. 254nn7–8, 255n27, 255n40, 255n42, 256nn48–49
Bidez, Joseph 50, 58n9
Biriukov, Dmitry 195n77
Blowers, Paul 246, 253, 255n29, 256n51
Boese, Helmut 255n36
Bostock, David 73n25
Bouton-Touboulic, Anne-Isabelle 74n63
Boys-Stones, George R. 73n12
Bradshaw, David 194n65
Bright, William 146nn70–72
Brisson, Luc 58n24, 74n59, 74n62, 97n30, 145n55, 271n8, 271n10, 271n19, 271n27, 272n47
Brown Dewhurst, Emma 9, 172n20, 255n33
Bull, Christian H. 170n1, 177n17
Bunge, Fr. Gabriel 270n4, 271n14
Burns, Dylan 154, 170n1, 170nn5–6, 172n21, 172n24, 172n27, 172n30, 175n83, 176n102, 176n110, 176n113, 177n122, 194n62
Burnyeat, Myles F. 131, 142n12, 143n14, 194n57
Bury, Robert Gregg 27n18
Busine, Aude 51, 58n14
Byers, Sarah Catherine 285n4

Caluori, Damian 96n1, 97n41, 98n45
Camelot, Pierre-Thomas 44n7
Capurro, Rafael 196n102
Cardullo, Loredana R. 216n61
Casiday, Augustine M. 270n4, 271n35
Ceresa-Gastaldo, Aldo 231n38
Champion, Michael W. 111n4
Chase, Michael 271n23
Chiaradonna, Riccardo 74n44, 215n8
Chlup, Radek 172n30, 248, 255n34, 255nn38–39, 255n43
Clark, Gillian 59nn29–32, 59n34, 271n9, 271nn11–12, 271n22, 271n28
Clarke, Emma 161, 172n32, 173n38, 173n40, 173n43, 173n46, 173n48, 174n51, 177n116, 232nn57–58
Constas, Nicholas (Fr. Maximos) 109, 112n32, 113nn53–54, 113nn58–60, 192n22, 216n51, 216n56, 216nn64–65, 254n11, 254n16, 255n23, 255n28
Corcilius, Klaus 271n24
Corrigan, Kevin 96n10, 270n4
Coughlin, Rebecca 173n45, 173n50
Courcelle, Pierre 45n22, 45n29
Criswell, David 196n93
Crouse, Robert 44n3, 44n15
Crouzel, Henri 27n1, 145n49

Damian, Theodor 171n20
DeMarco, David 57n1
Dillon, John M. 136, 142n9, 143n29, 144n37, 145n53, 154, 170n3, 170n5, 171n12, 171n18, 172n25, 173nn41–42, 175n76, 175n86, 175n96, 190n3, 271n8, 271n19, 271n27, 272nn46–47
Dobell, Brian 44n1, 127n19
Dodaro, Robert 25n21, 25n28
Dodds, Eric Robertson 169, 173n45, 177n117, 191n8, 194n51, 196n91, 231n48, 231nn52–54, 232n54, 232n66, 254n4, 254n13, 255n35
Dorival, Gilles 28n45
Dörrie, Heinrich 3, 11, 12n1, 12nn12–13
Drăgulin, Pr. (Fr.) Gheorghe I. 193n43
Drobner, Hubertus R. 73nn35–37
Düring, Ingemar 271n23
Dysinger, Luke 270n4

Ebert, Theodor 271n24
Ekenberg, Tomas 10, 127n7
Emilsson, Eyjólfur Kjalar 7–8, 74nn43–44, 97n28, 97n31, 97n41, 146n62, 170n1, 172n28, 172n34, 173n37, 175n68, 231n51, 270n1, 285n13
Erismann, Christophe 215n1, 215n4, 215n11, 215n20, 215n22, 215n24, 215n27, 215n31

Finamore, John 170n1, 175n88
Fleet, Barrie 89, 98n42, 215n36
Fleteren, Frederick van 127n16
Florovsky, Fr. Georges 160–162, 167–168, 171n9, 172n23, 174n53, 174n58, 174n67, 175n67, 175n71, 175n73, 175n90, 176n108
Fontanier, Jean-Michel 127n9
Frede, Michael 96n3, 284n4

Garrigues, Juan-Miguel 232n60
Gavin, John S.J. 192n22
Geerard, Maurice 28n47
Géhin, Paul 260, 270n2, 271n13, 271n15
Gersh, Stephen 231n50, 232n54
Gerson, Lloyd P. 142n4, 170n1, 215n5
Gertz, Sebastian 111n3
Gibbons, Kathleen 268, 272n43
Gifford, Edwin Hamilton 29n105, 58n15, 58n17, 58n19, 58n23, 58n27, 59n35, 59nn37–39

Golitzin, Alexander (Archbishop) 170n3, 171n9, 171n12, 171n20, 172n23, 191nn6–7, 192n27, 194n65, 195n69, 195n73, 195nn76–77, 195n80, 196n92, 196n96
Gontikakis, Vasileios (Archimandrite) 163, 175n59
Goulet, Richard 57n2
Goulet-Cazé, Marie-Odile 28n59
Greig, Jonathan 232n66
Grelier Deneux, Hélène 27n3
Grillmeier, Alois 174n59, 174n66, 215n25
Guillaumont, Antoine 269–270, 270n2, 271n7, 271n18, 271n32, 271n36, 272nn48–50
Guillaumont, Claire 269, 270n2, 271n7, 271n18, 272nn48–50

Hadot, Ilsetraut 127n12
Hagedorn, Dieter 270n2, 271n35
Hagedorn, Ursula 270n2, 271n35
Hagendahl, Harald 44n10
Hainthaler, Theresia 174n59, 174n66, 215n25
Hankey, Wayne 196n97
Harnack, Adolf von 146n73, 146n77
Hausherr, Irenée 271n36
Hecht, Christine 5–6, 58n18
Heil, Günter 171nn10–11, 171n20, 171n42, 174n54, 175nn60–62, 175nn64–65, 175nn77–78, 175n87, 191n6, 191n10, 191nn14–15, 192n20, 192n23, 192nn26–27, 192nn29–30, 192n32, 192n34, 192nn36–38, 193n41, 193nn45–48, 194nn52–56, 194nn58–60, 194nn62–63, 194n66, 195n66, 195n68, 195n77, 195nn79–81, 196n83, 196nn85–91, 190nn 94–96, 196nn99–101, 197nn103–105, 216n58, 233n71
Heine, Ronald E. 230n13, 146n65
Henke, Rainer 73n18, 73n21
Hill, Edmund 45n34, 45n36
Hoenig, Christina 5, 44n4, 44n12, 45n26, 46nn40–41
Holgate, John 196n102
Hombert, Pierre-Marie 44n7, 44n18, 45n31, 46n40
Horn, Christoph 118–119, 127n3, 127n13

Ivanovic, Filip 175nn92–93, 192n26, 194n56, 195n73, 195n78

Janby, Lars Fredrik 45n38, 96n1, 170n1
Joest, Christoph 271n5
Johansen, Thomas K. 96n1
Johnson, Aaron P. 50, 54, 57n1, 57nn3–4, 58nn5–6, 58n20, 58n22, 58nn24–25

Kafka, Franz 190
Kalligas, Pavlos 96n1
Karamanolis, George E. 12, 27n1
Kenney, John P. 142n4
Kent, Bonnie 284n2
Khaled, Fr. Anatolios 147n79
King, Peter 285n6
Knepper, Timothy D. 191n13
Knuuttila, Simo 271n7
Kobusch, Theo 194n61
Koch, Hugo 171n12
Köckert, Charlotte 73n4, 73nn7–8, 73n13, 73nn33–34, 74n39, 74n45, 74n48
Krewet, Michael 270n1, 271n24, 272n40, 272n44

Lamb, Walter R.M. 44n8
Lampe, Geoffrey W.H. 193n45
Lang, Uwe Michael 251n30, 251n32, 216n40, 216n45
Larchet, Jean-Claude 220, 229n6, 232n62
Lauritzen, Frederick 261n61
Lebon, Joseph 206, 215n26
Lévy, Antoine O.P. 229n4
Lloyd, Antony C. 215n6, 215n10, 215n19, 216n61, 217n67, 231n51
Lossky, Vladimir 171n14, 177n119, 192n22, 194n64
Loudovikos, Fr. Nicholas 192n22
Louth, Fr. Andrew 143n32, 160, 163, 165, 171n9, 171n12, 171n20, 172n22, 172n31, 173n45, 174n54, 174nn56–57, 174n66, 175n82, 175n89, 192n31, 193n43, 194n56, 194n62, 195n73, 196n85, 216n57, 252, 254n10, 255nn45–46
Luibheid, Colm 191n4, 191n6, 191n13, 192n37, 193n43, 195n67, 195n78, 195n82, 197nn103–104

Madec, Goulven 27n1, 45n21
Magny, Ariane 58n7
Männlein-Robert, Irmgard 59n33
Marmodoro, Anna 74n41
Mateiescu, Sebastian 9, 215nn28–29, 216n38, 217n68, 255n25
May, Gerhard 73n1
Mazur, Zeke 173n45, 173n50
McGrath, Alister 45n27

Meijering, Eginhard P. 142n9, 143n14, 147n85
Menelaou, Iakovos 193n41
Merkel, Helmut 44n14, 44n16, 45n28
Metzler, Karin 73n2
Meyendorff, Fr. John 193n43
Mitralexis, Sotiris 246, 255n31
Moreschini, Claudio 27n1, 28n47
Morlet, Sébastien 4, 27n2, 28n52, 28n54, 30n119
Moro, Enrico 7–8, 73nn23–24, 73n26, 73n30, 74n51, 74n60, 74n64, 98n49
Muscolino, Giuseppe 58n20
Muyldermans, Joseph 272n41

Narbonne, Jean-Marc 96n10
Nasta, Michai 175n70
Nauroy, Gérard 73n22
Nautin, Pierre 28n47, 28n49
Neil, Bronwen 215n3
Newheiser, David 195n69
Newman, John Henry 142, 147n96
Niehoff, Maren R. 44n6
Noble, Christopher Isaac 97n32, 97n41
Nygren, Anders (Bishop) 170n3

O'Brien, Denis 79, 96nn8–10, 97n12, 98n48
O'Connell, Robert J. 44n2
O'Daly, Gerard J.P. 127n15
O'Donnell, James Joseph 44n2
O'Donovan, Oliver 284n3
O'Meara Dominic J. 84, 96n7, 96n12, 97n12, 97n23, 98n44, 190n1
O'Meara, John J. 44n14, 50, 58n10
Opsomer, Jan 81, 83–85, 93, 96n1, 96n12, 97nn12–13, 97n16, 97nn24–26, 98n47

Pallis, Dimitrios 170n1, 193n42, 194n64, 195n70
Panagopoulos, Spyros P. 193n41
Parker, John 216n58, 174n60, 174n62, 174n64, 175n77
Patillon, Michel 145n55
Pavlos, Panagiotis G. 8, 74n54, 96n1, 172n33, 190, 191n16, 193n39, 194n62, 254n2
Pépin, Jean 27n1, 73n20
Perczel, István 171n12, 176n102, 177n121, 192n25, 196n103
Perl, Eric D. 191n13, 193n41, 220, 229n3
Petridou, Lydia 194n54
Pine-Coffin, Richard Sydney 285n11
Pirtea, Adrian 10
Pitra, Jean-Baptiste 270n2, 271n36
Places, Édouard des 79, 96n6, 155
Plagnieux, Jean 45n32
Plasberg, Otto 44n11
Portaru, Marius 220, 229n5, 229nn7–8
Pouderon, Bernard 27n3, 27n28
Prinzivalli, Emanuela 27n8

Rémy, Gérard 44n4, 45n37
Rentel, Alexander 195n73
Rescigno, Andrea 74n55
Riedweg, Christoph 50, 58n8, 58n12, 59n40
Riggs, Timothy 193n41
Rist, John M. 171n13, 173n45
Ritter, Adolf Martin 171nn10–11, 171n20, 173n42, 174n54, 174nn60–62, 174nn64–65, 175nn77–78, 175n87, 191n6, 191n10, 191nn14–15, 192n20, 192n23, 192nn26–27, 192nn29–30, 192n32, 192n34, 192nn36–38, 193n41, 193nn45–48, 194nn52–56, 194nn58–60, 194nn62–63, 194n66, 195n66, 195n68, 195n77, 195nn79–81, 196n83, 196nn85–91, 196nn94–96, 196nn99–101, 197nn103–105, 216n58, 233n71
Romano, Francesco 216n61
Rorem, Paul 154, 165, 172n21, 172n23, 172nn26–27, 187, 191n4, 191n6, 191n13, 192n37, 193n43, 195n67, 195n73, 195n78, 195n82, 197nn103–104
Roueché, Mossman 216n41
Roy, Olivier du 74n56, 127n14
Runia, David T. 12n9, 110, 111nn7–8, 111n11, 112n12, 113n52, 113n64

Saffrey, Fr. Henri-Dominique 20, 28n51, 159, 170n3, 174n63
Sakalis, Ignatios M. 191n13
Sakharov, Sophrony (Archimandrite) 194n64
Salés, Luis 230n24
Sambursky, Samuel 155, 173n36, 173n39
Schäfer, Christian 84, 97n12, 97n25
Schaff, Philip 127n8, 215n21
Schroeder, Frederic M. 172n34
Schwyzer, Hans-Rudolf 96n10
Share, Michael 101, 110, 111nn6–8, 111n11, 112n12, 112nn14–16, 112nn18–20, 112n22, 112nn24–26, 112nn28–30, 112nn37–39, 113n52, 113n61, 113n64
Shaw, Gregory 151, 154, 165–168, 170n3, 170n8, 172n27, 172n32, 173n47, 175n94, 176n98, 176n101, 176n103, 176n105, 176nn112–113, 177n113, 177n115, 177nn123

Sherwood, Polycarp O.S.B. 220, 229n2, 230nn22–23
Simonetti, Manlio 145n49
Sinkewicz, Robert E. 271n15, 271n20, 271nn31–33, 272nn37–38, 272n42
Siorvanes, Lucas 229n9
Sirkel, Riin 215nn33–34
Smith, Andrew 45n22, 51–57, 58nn17–19, 58n21, 58n23, 58n27, 59nn36–37, 74n58
Sodano, Angelo R. 74n53
Solignac, Aimé 127n1, 127n6, 46n39
Sorabji, Sir Richard 73n32, 73n36, 74n38, 74n40, 100–101, 111, 111n5, 111n10, 112nn42–48, 113nn65–66, 151, 153, 170n3, 170n7, 267, 271n7, 272n39
Stamatellos, Giannis 196n102
Stang, Charles M. 192n22
Stead, Christopher 12n14
Steel, Carlos 97n13
Stemmer, Peter 231n37, 231n46
Stern-Gillet, Suzanne 96n1
Stiglmayr, Josef 171n12, 190n2
Stock, Wiebke-Marie 169, 177n118, 194n62
Strange, Steven Keith 172n34, 173n37, 231n51
Struck, Peter 154, 172n23, 174n65
Suchla, Beate Regina 175n75, 176n104, 191n6, 193n39, 193n44, 195nn74–76, 232n59, 254n18, 255n22

Tanaseanu-Döbler, Ilinca 58n8
Tarrant, Harold 271n23
Terezis, Christos A. 191n17, 193n41, 194n54
Theiler, Willy 44n2, 74n52
Thiel, Rainer 272n46
Thomson, Robert W. 113n67
Thunberg, Lars 232n62
Timotin, Andrei 58n20
Tobon, Monica 271n5, 271n17, 271n32, 271n34
Tolan, Daniel J. 8
Tollefsen, Torstein Theodor 8, 112n36, 147n95, 170n1, 172n20, 173nn35–36, 215n4, 220, 229n3, 229n6, 254n15, 255n20
Tornau, Christian 74n58, 275–276, 284n2
Törönen, Melchisedec 216n41, 216n43
Tsagdis, Georgios 196n97

Uthemann, Karl-Heinz 230n35

Vanneste, Jean S.I. 170n3, 194n64
Vasilakis, Dimitrios A. 9, 170n1, 171n9, 171n16, 175n72, 176n107, 176n109, 191n9, 192n35, 193n39, 193nn41–42, 196nn91–92, 254n2

Ware, Kallistos (Metropolitan) 194n65
Way, Sister Agnes Claire C.D.P. 111n1, 112n41, 113n63
Wear, Sarah Klitenic 171n18, 173nn41–42, 175n76, 175n86, 175n96, 190n3
Westerink, Leendert G. 192n21, 193n40
Wilberding, James 112n31, 112nn48–50
Williams, Rowan (Bishop) 133, 144n39, 146n73, 146nn76–77
Williams, Thomas 285n6
Wolff, Gustav 58n20
Wolfson, Harry Austryn 27n1
Wolterstorff, Nicholas 275–276, 279–280, 283, 284nn1–2, 285nn10–11
Wood, Jordan Daniel 9, 231n40
Wright, Georg Henrik von 97nn18–19

Yannaras, Christos 194n64

Zachhuber, Johannes 73n33, 215n2, 215nn11–13, 215nn15–16, 215n18, 230n17
Zeyl, Donald J. 45n26, 142n10

Index of subjects

activity 7, 82, 85, 101, 110, 112n23, 121, 137, 151, 152–154, 157–166, 168–169, 177n117, 177n121, 181, 183–187, 189, 192n27, 194n62, 194n66, 196n96, 211, 212, 213, 223–225, 227, 241, 243, 254n14, 256n47, 259, 262–263, 265, 267, 269, 278–281, 283
actuality 101, 103–104, 108, 112n23, 155, 217n63, 222–224, 228, 242
afterlife 18, 275, 281–282
analogy 125, 192n27, 195n77
anti-Christian 43, 45n29, 50–51, 56–57
Apollo 51–53
apophaticism 239, 241, 245, 249–250, 252
apprehension 68, 261–2
aptitude 71, 103, 155–156, 162, 172n33, 173nn35 and 42
archē 89, 109, 134
archetype 132–133, 141–142, 226–228
Archpriest 190, 196n93, 196n98
ascent 123–125, 127n16, 163, 226, 228, 280, 285n6
ascetic 191n7, 249, 253, 255n45, 258, 260, 264, 266, 268

badness 7–8, 78–95, 172n28, 282
beauty 65–66, 109, 122, 133, 167–168, 183, 192n24, 282
Bible 19, 21, 25–27
body 86–92, 107, 109, 231n51; human 6, 18, 41, 44n12, 125, 134, 167, 176n104, 259–261, 263–265, 267, 269, 282, 286n19; *see also* flesh
Byzantine 100, 193n43, 209, 239

capacity 65, 71–72, 86–87, 90, 103–104, 106, 135, 155–156, 158, 161, 173n41, 192n27, 212–213, 259
causality 63, 66, 87, 89, 94, 108–109, 185, 223, 225, 227; causation 93, 232n55, 241, 250–251, 254
Chalcedon 9, 158, 174n53, 202, 206–209, 213–214, 240
circumscription 205, 208, 266
citation, technique 51–53
cognition 8, 119–120, 123–124, 182, 261–264, 267
communion 25, 89, 182, 185–188, 246, 284
consubstantiality 39, 41, 43
contemplation 17, 22, 38–40, 42, 45n32, 46n42, 110, 124–125, 133, 137–138, 140–141, 146n63, 173n50, 186, 255n45, 259, 261, 268–269, 271n8
conversion 154, 269; *see also* reversion
cosmology 7–8, 105, 107, 109, 169, 240
creation 6–8, 12n10, 33–34, 63–67, 69, 71–72, 79, 100–106, 108–110, 52n113, 120, 122, 129–136, 138–142, 144n42, 161, 165, 168, 170, 171n20, 172n20, 189, 193n39, 201, 210, 212–214, 226, 228, 231n38, 240, 243–244, 247–248, 252–253; creatio ex nihilo 7–8, 64, 71, 165, 169, 171n20, 210
crucifixion 170, 245

deification 9, 154, 157, 165, 167, 169, 175n93, 176n97, 226–228, 246; *see also* theōsis
deluge 21
Demiurge 7, 18, 34, 66, 105, 130–132, 136–137, 139–141, 144n37, 145n53, 145n55, 177n121, 186
demiurgic 65, 67, 139
demon(s) 6, 19, 21, 33, 42, 46n40, 49–57, 58n24, 266–268, 272n41
demonology 5–6, 33, 46n40, 58n20
desire 41, 90, 140, 181–182, 185, 188–190, 253, 260, 262–263, 265–268, 282, 284
dialectics 21, 28n58, 174n62, 252
differentia 201–202, 207–214, 216n50, 217n67

differentiation 86, 208, 214
divine: attributes 69, 242; nature 69, 225, 242, 245–246, 248, 250, 252; simplicity 240–241, 249–251, 254; unity 242, 244, 247, 251, 254n7
divinity 10–11, 34–35, 38–41, 43, 50, 109–111, 138–140, 155–156, 159, 161, 164, 169, 182, 185, 190, 208, 221–224, 226, 239, 241, 244, 247–248, 251; *see also* humanity
dyad 119–121

economy 189, 242, 251
Egypt 4, 23, 29n96, 46n41, 157, 258
emanation 63, 94, 121, 160–161, 169, 171n20, 193n39
Epicureanism 276, 282
epistemology 34, 40, 43, 118, 152, 253, 258, 261, 271nn23–24
eschatology 9, 176n104, 226–228, 244, 246, 253, 255n22
essence 7, 67, 69, 82, 101, 109, 133–134, 137–139, 146n67, 157–158, 160–161, 165, 174n61, 204, 208–209, 211, 214, 215n35, 221–226, 228–229, 231n38, 232n66, 244, 246, 250, 252–253, 256n47, 259–260; and energies 160–161, 252–253, 256n47
eternal 7–9, 37–38, 44n4, 44n12, 63–67, 100–102, 104–105, 107–108, 110–111, 122, 124, 130–132, 142, 161, 242, 251, 253, 259–260, 282
ethics 10, 21, 28n59, 119, 258–260, 270, 275–276, 279–280, 283–284, 285n7, 285n13, 285n6
eudaimonism 275–278, 283
Evangelists 37–38, 44n20
ever-moving rest 246, 253
evil 6, 12n10, 50, 72, 78–82, 84–85, 92, 119–120, 122, 264, 281–283; *see also* badness
exemplarism 8, 129–130, 132–135, 137, 142
extension 86–87

faith 1–2, 5–6, 10–12, 21–22, 35, 37–43, 70, 118, 153, 185, 253, 279
fall 79, 88, 140–141, 168, 245, 249, 252, 278
Father 34, 39–40, 42–43, 65, 130–131, 137–141, 146n67, 147nn79–80, 155, 189, 220–223, 230n11
fear of death 281–283
flesh 55, 164, 195n74, 229, 260, 264, 282, 284–285
freedom 244–245, 250, 254
free will 38–39, 241, 243–245, 250–251, 254–255; *see also* voluntary

gaudium 279–280, 283, 285nn11–12
genus 201–203, 205, 207, 209–212, 214, 215n16, 216n61, 221, 225
geometry 24, 38
Gnosticism/Gnostics 27n8, 64, 66, 129, 264
gods 17–18, 22, 26, 36, 51–56, 95, 131, 144n37, 152, 156–158, 163, 169, 170n5, 173n41, 177n117, 177n119, 196n99, 221–222, 225, 230n13, 247, 281
Good, the 20–21, 65, 78, 80–83, 86, 92–95, 96n2, 98n48, 146n67, 161, 181
goodness 7–8, 67, 72, 80–82, 85, 93–94, 97n18, 106, 111, 159–162, 165, 174n61, 184, 240, 243, 247–248, 253, 280, 283
Gospel 4–5, 35–36, 38, 227
grace 38, 45n32, 126, 165, 227–228, 241, 245–246, 249, 253, 255n33

happiness 78, 121, 126, 127n7, 259, 275–284, 285n13; *see also* gaudium
hedonism 280, 284
Henads 163, 225, 230n13, 243–244, 246, 248–249, 253, 255n36
heresy 17, 43
hierarchy 9, 55, 93, 156, 158, 163, 168, 174n61, 181–190, 191n17, 192n22, 193n41, 194n53, 195n77
Holy Spirit, the 25, 37, 40, 42, 141, 189, 222–223, 230n30, 246, 253, 255n41
Homoians 39, 43
homoousios 130, 138–139
humanity 10, 41, 201, 205, 222–224, 226, 245, 253
hypostasis 138, 202, 204, 206, 214, 221–224, 228, 231nn39 and 41, 232n66

ideas 17, 22, 42, 129–142, 145n19, 146n67, 202–203, 225
illumination 21, 183, 190, 249; and perfection 184–188
image 8, 19, 23, 38, 44n12, 66, 93–95, 102, 121, 140, 142, 144n42, 147n94, 161–162, 186, 188–190, 196n99, 197n103, 221, 226–228, 266–267
imitation 131–132, 183, 226
immanence 181, 201, 205, 207, 248, 250, 253

incarnation 39, 141, 158, 159, 163, 165, 195nn76–77, 202, 206, 222–224, 227–229, 245
individuals 111, 130, 141, 201–208, 211, 215n17, 216n37, 226; *see also* particulars
ineffable 20, 136, 160, 221–222, 224, 226, 229
intellect (Intellect) 79, 82–83, 87, 91–92, 94–95, 121, 136–137, 145n53, 146n62, 154, 157, 228, 259–260, 262–264, 268–269
intelligible (Intelligible) 8, 17–18, 21, 34, 42, 68, 70, 90, 95, 96n10, 117, 119, 121–127, 134, 138, 242, 259–263, 268; intelligibles 86, 132, 137, 139–141, 146n62, 225; world (or realm) 82, 87, 143n36

joy 131, 137–138, 271n29, 279–280, 283–284; *see also* happiness
justification 38–39, 41, 249

kataphaticism 252, 255n41

likeness 19, 23, 34, 93, 142n12, 144n42, 147n94, 154, 157, 162, 166–167, 227–228, 253
living model 130–131
logic 9, 21–22, 187, 201–202, 205, 207–211, 213–214, 216n50, 217n67, 220–229, 232n66, 240–241, 250–252, 258
Logos 23, 25, 37, 130, 133–134, 136, 138–141, 144n37, 146n78, 147n94, 159; logoi 23, 86, 102–105, 108, 110, 142, 145n53, 244–245, 254n20, 255nn44–45; logos 78–79, 82, 243–245
love 37, 39, 42, 106, 121, 162, 167, 181–182, 184–185, 190, 193nn41–42, 195n74, 226–228, 241, 245, 249–252, 254, 262–265, 284n3

magic 35, 44n20, 45n23, 157, 169, 174n52, 177n117
Manichaeism 34–35, 38, 44n14, 72, 117–122
materialist theology 276
matter 7–8, 12n10, 17, 27n8, 63–72, 73n9, 74n43, 74n51, 74n58, 74n61, 78–95, 96n2, 96nn9–11, 97n12, 97n25, 97n29, 97n32, 98n44, 98n48, 101, 111, 134, 137, 141, 154–155, 262
mediation 38–43, 224
mediator 5, 37–42, 138, 168, 184–186, 232n66
monad 119–122, 134, 205, 221, 254n7
multiplicity 117, 119–122, 126–127, 181, 254n7

natures of Christ 158, 159, 202, 206–209, 213–214, 216n50, 223–224, 230n37, 231n41, 252
noetic 132–134, 168
nous 244, 246–247, 251, 253, 254n17, 255n34, 255n43
number 117–127

One, the 51, 78–80, 93, 95, 120–121, 154, 160–162, 169, 174n53, 225, 229n7, 230n13, 231n51, 241–244, 246, 248–252, 254, 255n34, 255n36; *see also* Good, the
oracle 22, 25, 34–36, 38, 45n22, 49–57, 155, 158, 174n52

paradigm 8, 34, 37, 44n12, 94–95, 100, 102–103, 108, 110, 130–133, 136, 140, 142, 228
paradox 129, 155–156, 163–164, 246, 250–252
participation 9, 23, 65, 138, 142n3, 161–163, 185, 192n35, 202, 204, 220–223, 225–226, 228, 229–231, 245–246, 253
particulars 109, 170, 244–245
passion(s) 10, 52, 92, 258–270, 282
Passion 19, 169, 171n10
perichōrēsis 220–229
physics 21, 28n59, 224
pleasure 9–10, 23, 91, 121–122, 258–259, 261–266, 268, 276, 281–284, 286n19
polytheism 18, 138, 141–142, 163, 223
potenciality 103–104, 155
potency 146n42, 155–156, 173n41, 225
prayer 155, 169, 173n41, 223, 255n45, 260, 267, 271n8
predeterminations 244, 254n18
principle 2, 4–9, 23–24, 49, 63, 65, 67, 69–70, 72, 79, 83, 85–86, 90, 94, 103–105, 109, 189, 279–281
procession (of creation) 93, 181, 183, 193n39, 225, 232n66, 248; *see also* reversion
production 93–94, 98n48, 193n39, 208–209
prophecy 33, 36, 38–39, 42–43
providence 9, 64–65, 72, 97n36, 106, 111, 120, 129–130, 137, 140–141, 147n94, 160, 181, 184, 186, 188, 190, 239–240, 243–244, 247–249, 253, 255n36, 276
purification 37, 39, 41–43, 156–157, 182, 184–185, 187–188, 268–269

radiation (of goodness) 243, 248
resurrection 6, 18–21, 27n8, 37, 41, 44n12, 169, 176n104, 245, 249, 251, 275
revelation 5, 11, 19, 23, 38, 64, 143n14, 160–161, 165–166, 169, 176n102, 194n65, 251–252
reversion 141, 147n94, 181, 248
ritual 49–50, 151, 155, 164, 167, 169, 172n23, 173n50, 177n115, 177n117, 182–183, 185–187, 190, 195n74, 276

sacrifice 51–56, 155
salvation 5, 37–38, 51, 57, 159, 170, 278
sanctification 158, 245–246
Scripture 7, 17, 20–26, 29n96, 66, 71, 118, 123, 126, 135, 140, 153, 186, 189–190, 243, 251, 277, 284
senses, the 6, 120–122, 124, 126, 260, 266
sensible 17–18, 21, 63, 68, 117, 119, 121–124, 126, 154, 156, 202, 242, 259, 262, 266–268, 272n41; world 70, 72, 83, 87, 88, 90, 91, 95, 97n33, 97n36, 101, 141, 152, 177n113, 259–261, 263, 269
sin 38–39, 41–42, 78–79, 249, 278
Son, the 43, 130, 137–141, 146n67, 147n79, 159, 221–222, 230n11, 230n15
soul 8, 10, 17–18, 21–23, 26, 27n8, 33, 37, 45n22, 57, 78–80, 82–83, 85–86, 88–92, 94–95, 96n9, 97n21, 97n38, 97n41, 98n44, 103, 119–120, 123–126, 129, 132–134, 137, 140–141, 144n42, 145n53, 154, 156, 157, 163, 167, 172n27, 173n41, 174n62, 182, 195n77, 208, 213, 243, 249, 258–270, 280–283; created 33, 37, 45n22
species 9, 111, 201–205, 207, 209–212, 214, 215n17, 216n61, 225
Stoicism 6, 78, 96n3, 267, 270, 284
substance 27n8, 41, 64–66, 68–70, 83, 89, 95, 102–103, 109, 119, 122, 152, 159, 194n66, 203, 208–210, 213, 215n16, 247
subtraction 67–68, 70, 205

technē 136, 156–157
theōsis (deification) 165, 239, 244–246, 253
theurgy 8–9, 152–170, 172n27, 172n30, 174n45, 174nn49–50, 175n80, 175n83, 175n91, 176n102, 176n110, 177n113, 177n117, 191n16, 192n37, 194n62, 254n2
threat 49–51, 57
time 8, 25, 43, 63, 71, 100–102, 104–106, 108–109, 111, 130, 136, 195n77, 241–242, 245–246, 248, 254n15, 254n20
transcendence 101, 129, 145n53, 216n37, 224, 226, 232n66, 244, 248–252, 256n47
Trinity 18–19, 21, 37, 118, 137–138, 189, 204, 221–222, 224, 226, 254n7
truth 4–5, 11, 17, 23–25, 27, 33–38, 40, 42–43, 46n41, 65, 105, 112n13, 117, 119, 123–126, 136, 146n67, 153, 160, 166, 174n61, 195n74, 223, 227–228, 240, 245, 251, 276, 280, 285n17

union 10, 183, 188, 206, 208, 211, 213, 220, 222, 224, 226–228, 259, 260
unity 82, 86, 93, 117, 119–123, 126–127, 162, 206, 210–211, 214, 225, 242, 244, 246, 251
universe 27n8, 33–34, 44n12, 63, 67, 87, 117–122, 126–127, 131, 140, 157, 168, 170, 177n119, 185, 240–242, 244, 246, 248, 251–252

vice 8, 80, 258–259, 268
virtue 22, 81, 84, 119, 139, 226, 228, 247, 249, 255n33, 260–261, 265, 268–270, 277, 279–280, 282, 284
voluntary 41, 63, 80, 164, 243, 249

will *see* free will
wisdom 37, 124–126
Word 158, 221, 223–224, 226–228, 230n30
worship 36, 45n22, 51, 153–154, 162–163, 195n73, 195n80